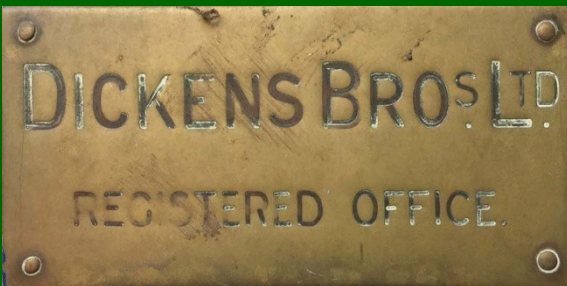


Former Dickens Brothers Ltd
Leather Manufactory
Kettering Road, Northampton

Historic Building Record

Historic Environment Record Event No. 109702
Planning App. Ref. N/2018/1238

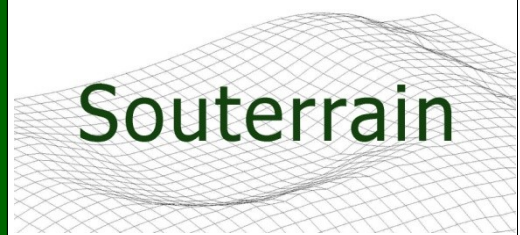


January 2020

Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd

for

Elsevier Group Ltd



Souterrain

Archaeological Services Ltd



**Former Dickens Brothers Ltd
Leather Manufactory,
Kettering Road, Northampton
(NGR 476109, 261003)**

PLANNING APPLICATION REF. N/2018/1238
NORTHAMPTON HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD EVENT NO ENN109702

SOUTERRAIN PROJECT SOU19-675

January 2020

Produced for:

Elsevier Group Ltd

69b Kettering Road
Northampton

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Summary

In November 2019, a former leather manufactory building in Northampton was recorded prior to its conversion to residential apartments.

Formerly known as Dickens Brothers Ltd., the factory was purpose-built in 1900. It was located a short distance to the east of the town centre, an area characterised by rows of late 19th century terraced houses, interspersed with large contemporary edifices - boot and shoe factories, schools and places of non-conformist worship. It is situated in the Northampton Boot and Shoe Conservation Area. The business was run by the same family until its closure in 2019 and was one of the UK's longest operating leather producers.

The factory is a rectangular three storey building with gabled ends. It is typically built in red brick, roofed in Welsh slate and has blue brick door jambs and window sills. A main architectural design feature of the building's interior is a twin colonnade of cast-iron columns, on three levels, which provide the main internal structural support system up to third floor level.

The report greatly expands on a preliminary study of the building and record of its exterior, made by English Heritage in the course of the 'Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry Rapid Survey' (1999).

Principally, the present study derives information about the building's historical context from an interview held during the course of research with Mr Brian Roy Dickens, former director of Dickens Brothers. The report includes a number of detailed photographs, of leather-production operations inside the factory, which were taken in 1929 to mark the company's 20th anniversary.

The report provides a descriptive and illustrative account of the building's interior and exterior in its present 'as found' state by means of photographic catalogue, scaled elevations and plans.

Preface

All statements and opinions in this document are offered in good faith. Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) cannot accept responsibility for errors of information or opinion resulting from data supplied by a third party, or for any loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of statements or opinions expressed in this document.

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1. THE HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

- 1.1 This document presents an illustrated and descriptive 'as found' Historic Building Record of an early 20th century leather manufactory building at 69 Kettering Road, Northampton, prior to its conversion to residential apartments. The historic building is a Non-designated Heritage Asset.
- 1.2 The Historic Building Record (the Record) has been prepared by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd (Souterrain) for the Developer, Elsevier Group Ltd. (Northampton), in accordance with a Condition attached to the grant of Planning Permission by Northampton Borough Council (NBC). The compilation of the Record is in accordance with paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework¹ which requires a developer to record, and to advance understanding of the significance of heritage assets that are to suffer change or loss due to development.
- 1.3 The Record observes the current national guidance of Historic England (*Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2016)). It comprises:
- a historic account.
 - a photographic archive (digital images);
 - measured plans and elevations; and
 - a descriptive account
- 1.4 The report provides a comprehensive visual documentation of the former leather manufactory building prior to the permitted conversion. Integral to the Record is a historical account of the building derived from both an oral historical account and primary archive sources, the aim of which has been to gain an understanding of the building's local and wider historical context. The Record falls within the overarching context of Historic England's *Thematic Research Strategy for the Historic Industrial Environment*, Priority IND5 (English Heritage 2010, 3.5, 17, 26) which is the study industrial buildings and sites, combining structural and technological understanding with an appreciation of their social, historical and geographical context.
- 1.5 The historic account is drawn primarily from the following sources:
- English Heritage's *Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry Rapid Survey Record* (Aug. 1999)
 - Interview with Mr B R Dickens, former director of Dickens Brothers Ltd
 - Private archive and photographic collection of Mr B R Dickens
 - Published secondary sources
- 1.6 A purpose of the Record is to inform future conservation decisions and subsequent management of the structure.
- 1.7 The report and archive is to be available as a public-accessible record.

¹ MHCLG 2019 (Feb.) *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

2. PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 25th October 2019, Northampton Borough Council granted Full Planning Permission (N/2018/1238), subject to conditions, to the Elsevier Group Ltd (the Planning Applicant and Developer) for ‘*Proposed conversion of warehouse/factory to 25 no. flats and demolition of single storey projection and removal of dormer*’.
- 2.2 The area and subject of the proposed development is defined on the drawings (latest revisions) by Design Board Architectural Services, submitted with the planning application: A531 - SLPa, A531 - 1a, A531 - 3d, A531 - 2, A531 - 4e, A631-CP1A.
- 2.3 Condition 3 of the planning permission requires that ‘*No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority*’. In this case, the necessary programme of archaeological work is to be the recording of the building to an appropriate level (i.e. Level 2) as defined in Historic England’s *Understanding Historic Buildings* (2016). The Condition follows specific advice from NBC Conservation:
- “The building is part of a significant group of industrial buildings within the Boot and Shoe Quarter Conservation Area that make a positive contribution to its character and appearance of the area. It is identified as a potential candidate for the Local List in the adopted appraisal and management plan for the area... .. Given the historic significance of the building, recording of the building before conversion is justified and should be required by condition”.*
- 2.4 The historic building record was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme², accepted in advance by Liz Mordue, Archaeological Advisor for Northamptonshire County Council and statutory heritage consultant for Northampton Borough Council.

3. LOCATION & ASPECT

- 3.1 The historic leather manufactory building is located in the Castle Ward of Northampton, on the eastern edge of the town centre. The building is located to the west of Kettering Road, where it is approached via an archway gatehouse which leads to a factory courtyard.
- 3.2 The building is situated off the northwest corner of the courtyard. It is centred at National Grid Reference NGR 476109, 261003. It is broadly rectangular in plan, with its long-axis aligned NNW/SSE, and occupies a footprint of about 392 sq.m (c. 24.5 m x c. 16 m). The neighbourhood of the former factory is characterised by rows of late 19th century terraced dwellings, interspersed by contemporary boot and shoe factories and places of worship. The houses were built predominantly to house the factory workers.

4. HISTORY OF THE MANUFACTORY

The Existing Record

- 4.1 A brief history of Dickens Brothers Leather Works at Kettering Road, Northampton was compiled in August 1999 for English Heritage’s *Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry Rapid*

² Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd. 2019 (Nov.) *Scheme for a Historic Building Record: Scheme for a Historic Building Record: Former Dickens Brothers, Boot and Shoe Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton (NGR 476109, 261003)*, Planning App. Ref. 19/00864/FUL, HER Event No. ENN109702, SOU19-675

Survey Record, at which time the exterior of the building was also described. The factory was still in operation at that time, although its interior does not appear to have been accessed for the purposes of recording. The company and the building received passing mention in the English Heritage publication *Built to Last? The Buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot and Shoe Industry* and the building was included in the accompanying Walking Tour of Northampton's Boot and Shoe District (2004, 46, fig 45). It is also briefly referred to in Northampton Borough Council's *Boot & Shoe Quarter Appraisal and Management Plan* (2011)³. A primary objective of the present report has been to augment English Heritage's preliminary study.

The Present Record

- 4.2 For the present study, the primary source of information concerning the history of Dickens Brothers Limited comes from the company's last and final director, Mr Brian Roy Dickens, whom Martin Wilson of Souterrain interviewed on the 16th December 2019. Additional and corroborative information has been acquired from *Nostalgic Northampton* (2012) and *British Newspaper Archives*. Brian Dickens, son of company director Arnold Dickens, joined the family's business in September 1959 after completing his training at Northampton Technical College (St Georges Avenue). Until 1994 he ran the business with his brother Stephen (Co-director and Sales manager), thereafter as sole operating director. However, with no further family interest to continue the business, Brian commenced the wind up of the company in August 2018, which was eventually dissolved on the 4th September 2019. The premises were sold to Elsevier Group Ltd for residential development. Dickens Brothers was the longest running finished leather manufacturing business in Northampton, and perhaps the oldest in the UK.

Company History

- 4.3 The company was founded by Brian Dickens' grandfather, William John (preferred name) Dickens (b. 1860), who was the son of a shoe maker in the village of Walgrave, Northamptonshire (c. 9.5 miles northeast of Northampton). John Dickens began leather production in his father's workshop, employing a number of other out-workers operating from their own backyard workshops. In 1897, Dickens set up a small factory in Victoria Street, The Mounts, Northampton. This was enabled partly with a loan from the Capital and Counties Bank Limited⁴, and partly with a loan from his father-in-law. Initially, in response to the local market, he produced black and brown outer leather from English cowhides, using vegetable and oak bark tanning techniques. In 1899 he bought a row of cottages and courtyard at Kettering Place (Fig. 2), a short distance to the east of Northampton town centre. In the next year, the buildings were cleared and the site redeveloped with a new purpose-built factory (Fig. 3). The building was erected by a renowned Northampton builder, Alfred Powell Hawtin, although the architect is, as yet, uncertain.
- 4.4 When John Dickens died in 1903, the manufactory was taken over by his eldest two sons, Alfred and Arnold (Figs. 6 & 7), who had been engaged by the firm since 1899. In 1905, the brothers switched to the production of lining leather, importing kips and kip sides⁵ from Madras, India, including sheep and goat hides. These were pre-tanned and dyed 'crusts'. At the Kettering Road works the crusts were fat-liquored ('fat-licked') to soften and level their thickness, re-tanned and finished. The brothers proved to be as enterprising as their father. Arnold Dickens undertook sales visits abroad securing trade deals in the United States and Canada and other Commonwealth countries, which were to be the company's main sales

³ Planning Policy & Conservation Section, Northampton Borough Council, May 2011

⁴ A part of Lloyds Bank since 1918

⁵ A kip = leather weighing between 15 and 20 lbs

outlets from 1908 onwards. The brothers were joined by their younger brother, Reginald, who after serving in the Great War, re-joining the firm in 1919 (Fig. 18). Throughout the war the company was contracted by the government to produce leather for the army. The company was incorporated as a private limited company on the 15th June 1921. Reginald left in 1934 to form his own business.

- 4.5 Raw materials were sourced via agents. Shipments arrived in bales at the Tilbury and Liverpool docks. It was not unusual for whole shipments to be spoiled during transit or unloading (leading to continuous insurance claims), a problem that was finally resolved with the use of container shipping in the late 1960s, with goods thereafter arriving at Felixstowe. In the first half of the 20th century the leather production process was very labour-intensive, with much handwork. In the 1920s to 1950s, some 50 people (predominantly male) were engaged at the Kettering Road works, which by then was commonly known as the Central Leather Works⁶.
- 4.6 During World War II the company again held government contracts to produce leather; this time producing sheepskin flying boots for the RAF. Such was the success of the company that in the Autumn of 1940, it was publically announced that it had large reserves from substantial profits⁷. As such, “the Directors had come to the conclusion that the Company had more capital than was necessary for its business and that the surplus ought to be returned to the shareholders”. The reserves amounted to £30,000 equivalent to c. £1,690,460 today (2020); of which £15,075 was returned to shareholders, equivalent to c. £849,456 (2020).
- 4.7 The leather production work was mechanised in stages over the years. The factory was originally designed to house a line-shaft from which the machinery was belt-driven. Photographs taken in 1929 show the extensive use of the line shaft on the factory ground floor, and on the first and second floors (Figs. 8, 9, 11-13). An advertisement in the local press in 1923 for the sale of the firm’s 6/12 H.P. Tangye horizontal steam engine⁸ suggests that the machinery was originally steam-powered, although it is not known where the boiler and engine(s) were installed inside the factory. At the time of the historic building survey, there was no trace of line-shaft installations, although a dismantled section of shaft with drive-wheels had been placed outside the factory (Section 11, photo 69). Given the range and types of machines (and range of speeds) it is possible that power was subdivided from more than one engine. Steam pipes are visible on a photograph of the third (drying) floor of the factory, taken in 1929 (Fig. 10). Machines with integral electric motors were gradually installed from the 1950s onwards. A traction lift was used for the conveyance of materials between the ground floor and third floor, which was presumably an original feature of the building. It was not possible to view the lift interior or lift mechanism during this survey. As production processes became increasingly mechanised at the factory, from the mid 20th century onwards, the required number of operatives diminished; eventually to 15. In September 1980, Dickens Brothers Limited was no longer permitted to undertake tanning operations at the Kettering Road factory on account of the risk of ground water contamination. A settling tank apparently collected the waste liquids from the tanning process, but this was deemed inadequate protection.

⁶ Local press: e.g. *Northampton Mercury* - Friday 18 December 1925, *Northampton Chronicle and Echo* - Thursday 1 November 1923

⁷ *Northampton Mercury* - Friday 18 October 1940

⁸ *Northampton Chronicle and Echo* - Thursday 1 November 1923

- 4.8 It was also around 1980 that the pattern of suppliers began to change. Hides ceased to be obtainable from India as the country increasingly undertook the whole process of leather production 'in house'. Thereafter, for about two decades Sri Lanka was the supplier, until that market was likewise closed. Finally, the raw materials were mainly sourced from Bangladesh, until the winding up of Dickens Brothers in 2018.

The Leather Manufacturing Process at Kettering Road

- 4.9 The imported temporarily-cured 'crusts' / sides had first to be rehydrated or 'wetted' to soften and to make them workable. This was heavy work and took place on the factory ground floor, which accommodated 4 or 5 large wooden tumbler drums, belt driven from the line shaft (Fig. 8). Known as fat-liquoring, the process comprised re-greasing the sides by tumbling them in hot fat liquor for several hours in the drums. The liquor was usually created by boiling a mixture of tallow and soap in water. The process also drew off all of the old curing materials (usually salts) and adhering fats, blood, proteins and dung, which were apparently collected in a large settling tank. The tumbling drums might be drained and replenished with fat liquor several times depending on the method in which the sides had been pre-cured. The chrome tanning of the sides was then carried out in the tumbler drums using chromium sulphate diluted with a form of fat liquor; a process of up to 8 hours. The splitting and shaving machines were also located on the ground floor (Fig. 9): splitting using a high-speed band knife; shaving employing a high velocity abrasive process. Once tanned, the sides were taken by lift to the third floor (Fig. 10) where they were stretched out and pegged on drying racks. The drying process was assisted by a system of heated pipes at floor level (Fig. 10; see also Fig 13). A series of small iron grill vents (Section 11, photos 59 & 62) in the floor assisted air to circulation. In more recent years, the sides, once dried, were colour - sprayed on the third floor. The use of cellulose products meant that fires were not unusual; fire was controlled by a sprinkler system, but ruined any exposed materials. The dried sides were taken down to the second and first floors for finishing (Figs. 11-13), where they underwent a machine-assisted operation of buffing to remove faults and scratches, pigments being added as necessary. On the first floor the sides were taken through the process of boarding, measuring and baling for despatch (Fig. 14). The plating process effectively involved the use of a large temperature-controlled industrial iron⁹. The finished products consisted of half-hides (or half-sides) each between 2 sq. ft and 5 square feet, and were sold by area, having been measured out on a roller-based pin-wheel machine.

5. DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING & OBSERVATIONS

- 5.1 In the descriptions below, bold numbers in square brackets refer to photograph numbers (Section 11; Appendix 1). The photograph viewpoints are shown on Figures 25 to 27. The metric scales which appear in the photographs are either 2 m in length with divisions of 0.2 m, or 1 m and 2 m with divisions of 0.2 m (for interior features). Although the long axis building is aligned north-northwest/south-southeast, for ease of description elevations will be referred to as north, south, east and west.

Building Exterior

- 5.2 The building elevation drawings and plans in this report (Figs. 25 to 31) are based on those created by Design Board Architectural Services. Drawings have been amended and

⁹ Sides are placed in a high temperature press to provide a smooth finish to the surface of leather

augmented as necessary by Souterrain to depict architectural detail. A cross section has also been created showing the internal arrangement of floors (Fig. 32).

- 5.3 At the time of the survey the building was shrouded in scaffolding. As such, it was not possible to gain clear photographs of elevations, nor was it possible to gain clear sight of the upper half of the exterior of the building at any point.

Historic England Survey Record

- 5.4 The following description is extracted from English Heritage's *Northamptonshire Boot & Shoe Industry Rapid Survey Record* (Aug. 1999):

"Dickens Brothers' works was built in 1900 as part of the firm's expansion from its original base in Victoria Street. Four cottages to the rear of 69 Kettering Road were demolished to allow the factory to be built in a yard extending from the west side of Kettering Road almost to Dunster Street.

The works is via an archway in a three-storey gatehouse [72], gabled north-south with its principal elevation on Kettering Road. The main building, also gabled north-south, has three storeys and an attic and occupies the west end of the yard [1]. On the north side of the yard is a five-bay two-storey store gabled east-west. To the west of the main building are the truncated remains of a yard wall that formerly divided Dickens's premises from those of 105 St Michael's Road (Site 39). All the buildings are built in red brick with blue brick door jambs and window sills. All the openings, unless indicated, have segmented heads.

The main building [1] appears to be relatively unaltered except for the insertion of ventilator trunking and fans in various places. The works and office entrances are in a single bay at the south end of the six-bay east elevation [Figs. 26 & 28]. The office is on the second floor and has timber sashes [3 & 6]. Placed mid-way along this floor is an oriel window [not present at the time of the survey] probably to provide a view of the yard from the office. The top floor has large, regularly spaced windows with flat heads rising into the eaves [Fig. 28]. The window frames have six opening lights to provide controlled ventilation for the leather storage and drying floors; similar frames, but in segmental-headed openings, are in the four-bay south gable. Additional leather storage is provided in the attic which is lit by two large sash windows in the gable end [Fig. 30; 68]. On the west side of the gable is a large stack which may be part of the air circulation system for the leather drying [not visible or accessible]. The flat-roofed, lean-to structure running along almost the entire east side of the ground floor was built as a loading area before the 1920s; it is shown on the 1924 OS 1:2500 map and its timber loading doors. [A covered yard ran alongside almost the entire length of the east side of the building. This had a multi-pitched glazed roof, and is partly visible on historic photographs [Fig. 17]. It had been removed prior to the survey, yet its form and position may be traced from scars and wall paint on the eastern elevation (6, 8)].

The two-storey store in the yard has been altered with new window frames in the top floor and extensive patching of the brickwork¹⁰ [71]. The blue brick window stills and jambs, along with the surviving segmental-headed windows on the ground floor, suggest that it may be contemporary with the main works. [Figs. 23 & 24 show the building c.1960s, at which time it was used as a canteen]. It has a seemingly identical building on its north side.

The rear elevation of the gate house [70] has the same details as the main works, suggesting that they are contemporary. [The 1st edition OS map of 1885, surveyed 1883, shows the gate

¹⁰ This building is under separate ownership and not a part of planning condition 19/00864/FUL

house already in existence, which also concurs with Mr B R Dickens' understanding of the prior existence of the gatehouse]. *The Kettering Road elevation has a softer red brick for architectural details which include pilasters farming tripartite windows, an oculus in the dormer gable, string courses on the first and second floors and aprons beneath the window [72]. The segmental entrance arch has a stone key and carved imposts. The entrance is closed by a pair of wrought-iron gates. Adjoining the south side of this block are two-late 18th century ironstone houses now used as shops."*

Interior

- 5.5 At the time of the survey the building was a shell, all traces of fixtures, and machine installation having been removed. A series of photos taken in 1929¹¹ (Figs. 8-15) have been included in this report and may be used for comparison with the 2019 catalogue.
- 5.6 A main architectural design feature of the building's interior is the twin colonnade of cast-iron columns, in three tiers, which provide the main internal structural support system up to third floor level (ground floor: **21-26**; first floor: **35-38**; second floor: **46-51** . There are five columns in each row, forming three aisles of equal width. They support timber cross-beams which are set within brick piers of the front and rear wall [**37, 39, 40**], and further define the six bays of the building. The diameter of each column narrows towards its capital which is held by a bolt-fixed bracket to the cross-beam (e.g. [**28, 35, 45**]). On each of the floors the columns further decrease in diameter. Partial stripping out rotten ceiling and floor boarding between the first and second floor enabled the tiered structural framework to be visualised [**45**]. This also revealed the extensive use of herring bone struts between joists on the first floor and second floors [**52, 48-49**], as a means of arresting movement caused by the use of machinery, or heavy loading. On the second floor, two rows of timber posts of the roof frame (Fig. 27) are offset slightly from columns [**54**].
- 5.7 Few original features survived on the ground floor (Fig. 25, [**23-27**]). Notably, the floor was of originally of laid brick to take the weight of heavy machinery [**25, 26**], although for the most part appeared to have been replaced or covered in concrete. Originally, there were two flights of stair to the first floor, one just inside the front door leading to the offices, the other at the rear (south side) of the lift shaft [**21**], which was used by factory operatives. An interesting feature of the operatives' stair was a goods ramp, which hinged from one side, covering half the width of the stair [**22**]. The lift shaft was encased in tongue and groove panelling, on all floors [**21, 28, 50, 53**].
- 5.8 On the first floor (Fig. 26), the office area partially survived. A photograph taken in 1929, of two former directors, Alfred and Arnold Dickens, shows that the Directors' office was located in the southeast corner of the first floor (Fig. 7). This overlooked the yard, where goods inward and outward operations could also be overseen. Photos **43** and **44** show the office in 2019. Further traces of its extent were discernible from both the position of sash windows and the division of light green paint [**29, 40-42**]. The company safe, located at the southwest end of the outer office, was *in situ* at the time of the historic building record [**29, 31, 41**]. This was late 19th / early 20 century fire-resisting safe made by the Milner Safe Company of Liverpool [**32, 33**]. The factory lavatory, a single water closet and hand basin, was also located on the first floor, beyond the offices to the southwest [**30**]. The working floor space was well-light on all sides by a large 12-pane double casement window in each bay [**35-38**], all of which appear to be original. Photo **39** shows a typical window. Many of the windows retained original wrought iron stays [**55**].

¹¹ from the collection of former company director Brian Dickens

- 5.9 Towards the south end of the central aisle [34] a single flight of open stairs leads to the second floor. The second floor was devoid of original fixtures or fittings other than the lift shaft housing. The third floor, the former drying area, was built inside the roof space, where five great timber trusses demarcate the six bays of the building [56-60]. The truss joints are secured by bolts and reinforced with wrought iron [61]. A photograph taken in 1929 shows that the drying racks incorporated the trusses (Fig. 10).
- 5.10 In the south gable, two large segmental arched windows lit the end bay [Fig. 31], each with two lever-operated casements [68] to allow ventilation. In contrast, the north gable end was lit by a 12 pane double casement, not dissimilar to those around the second and third Floors. An external fire escape, constructed of iron, was accessed at the north end of the building. The remaining four bays were served by a large 6-pane casement roof light at both the front and rear [64-66]. Above the third floor was an attic, its floor supported on the collar beams of the roof trusses [58-60; 64-65; 67-68]. The attic appears to have been used for additional drying space, though possibly also housed a boiler; steam heating pipe-work may be seen on the 1929 photograph running overhead and above the floor. The attic was lit by a similar array of casement roof lights (except for the bay housing the lift shaft) and a small casement (presumably lever-operated) in each gable end.

6. PHASING

- 6.1 Overall, the building appears to have been a single phase. Historic mapping shows no change to the site layout and there were no clear indications of external or internal alterations.

7. ARCHIVE & REPORT

- 7.1 The archive is intended as a public-accessible record, to be housed in the Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record. Copyright is retained by Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd from whom permission may be sought for reproduction.
- 7.2 The archive comprises a CD containing digital images, a copy of the report and index to photographs.
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| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| 1923 - 1924. | Publ. 1925. Ordnance Survey, Northamptonshire XLV.9 Rev. |
| 1938 | Publ. 1947. Ordnance Survey, Northamptonshire XLV.9 |

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Northampton Mercury - Friday 18 December 1925

Northampton Mercury - Friday 18 October 1940

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend our thanks to Mr Brian Roy Dickens for providing an invaluable insight to the history of Dickens Brothers and the workings of the factory at Kettering Place, and for permitting the reproduction of photographs from his private collection.

10. Figures

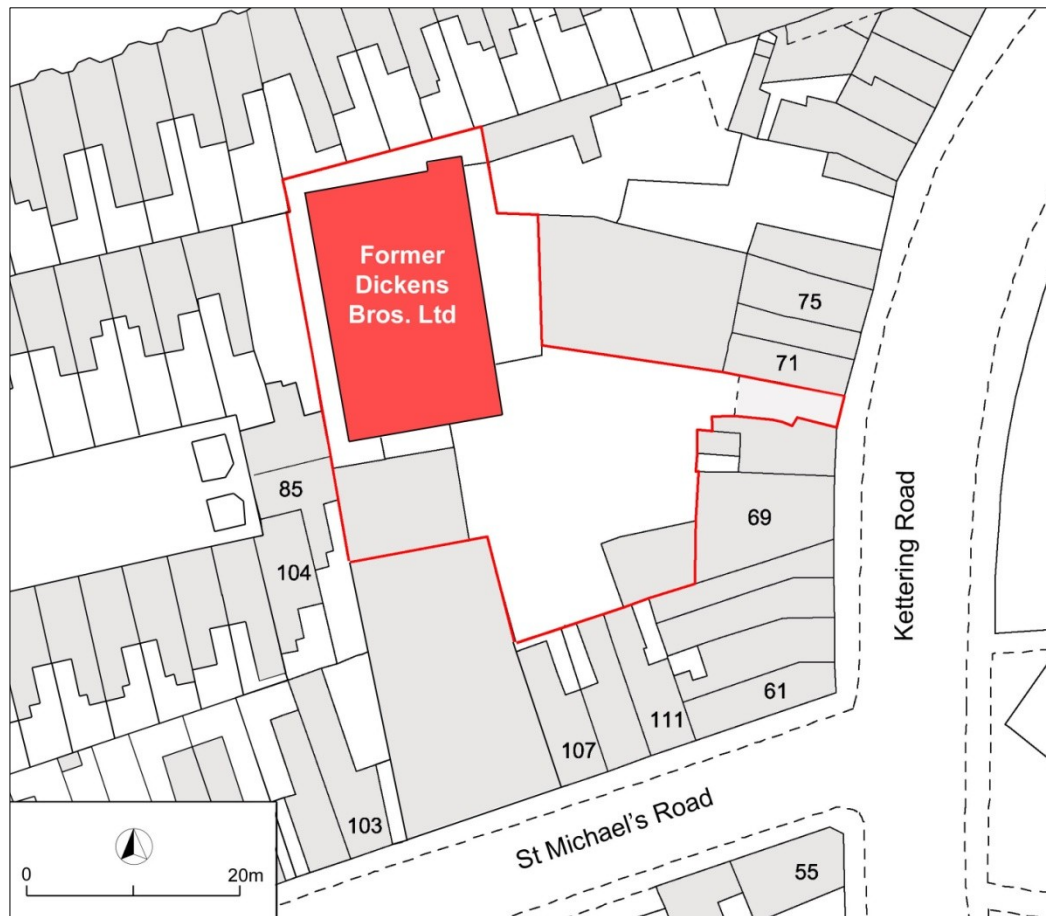


Figure 1. Location of the former Dickens Brothers Leather Works, Northampton
(red line denotes the Application Site boundary)

(based on Ordnance Survey mapping , © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL

Figure 2.

Extract of OS 10' map of 1885



Figure 3.

Extract of OS 25" map, surveyed 1923-4

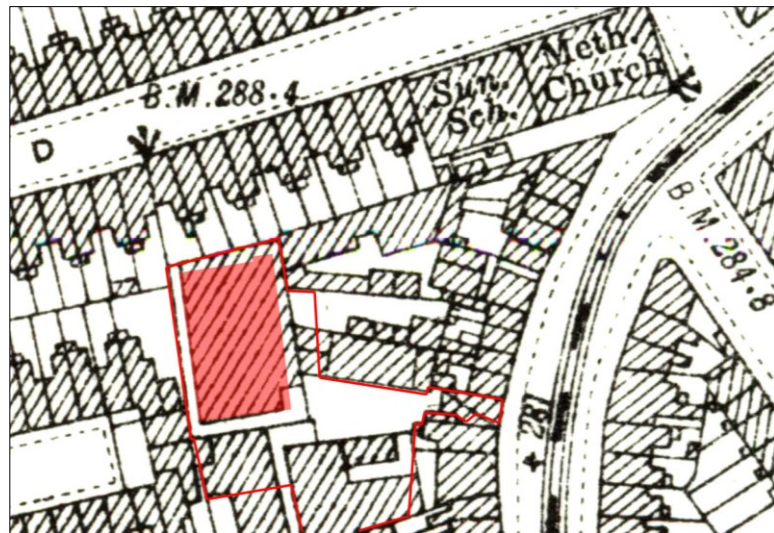


Figure 4.

Extract of OS 25" map, surveyed 1938

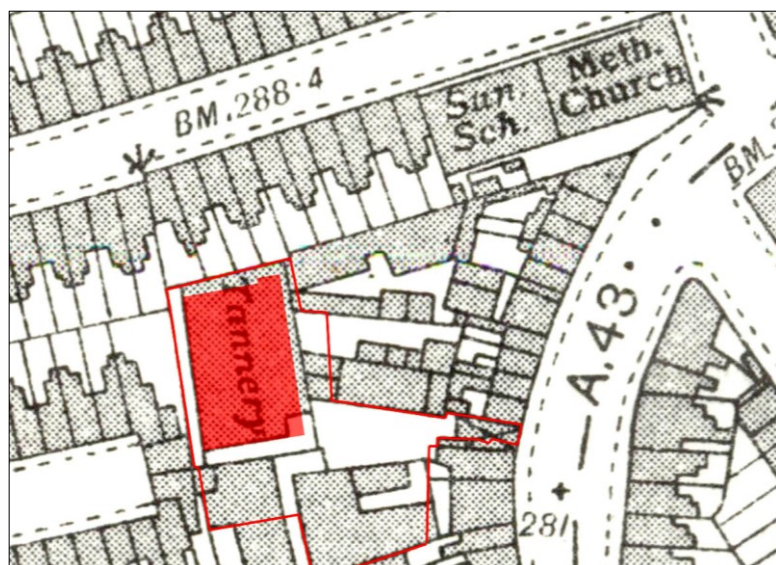




Figure 5. Directors & employees of Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 6. Detail of Figure 5. 1929. Arnold Dickens & Alfred Dickens (centre row 2nd & 3rd from L)

**Figure 7. Directors,
Arnold Dickens & Alfred
Dickens in the office of
Dickens Brothers
Leather Works, 1929**

*Photo: courtesy of
B R Dickens*



**Figure 8. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929 : fat liquoring and tanning processes
(ground floor)**

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 9. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: shaving and tumbling sides (ground floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 10. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: hanging sides to dry (3rd floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 11. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: finishing processes (2nd or 3rd floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 12. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: boarding processes (2nd or 3rd floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 13. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: finishing processes (2nd or 3rd floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 14. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: preparing finished sides for despatch (1st floor)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 15. Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1929: baling finished sides for despatch (? front annexe)

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 16. c.1956. Miss Marguerite F.M. Atkinson, M.B.E. Director of the British Leather Federation visits Dickens Brothers Leather Works

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 17. Directors & employees of Dickens Brothers Leather Works, 1st June 1949. Commemorating 50 years of service of Alfred Dickens & Arnold Dickens

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 18. Detail of Figure 17. 1949. Centre row, L to R: Stephen L Dickens, Arnold Dickens, Alfred Dickens, B. Dickens, Reginald O. Dickens

Figure 19.
Dickens Bros. Ltd
Leather Works,
c. late 1950s /
early 1960s

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 20. Dickens Bros. Ltd
Leather Works, c. 2004

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens





Figure 21. 1st February 1994.
Photograph taken on the
retirement of company
director, Stephen L Dickens

Photo: courtesy of B R Dickens



Figure 22. Detail of Figure 21.
1st February 1994.
Stephen L Dickens (L), Brian
Roy Dickens (R)



Figure 23. Warehouse on the north side of the yard. Used as the works canteen in the later 20th century. View from the factory, facing SE



Figure 24. Warehouse on the north side of the yard. Used as the works canteen in the later 20th century. Facing NE

11. Photographs: 2019

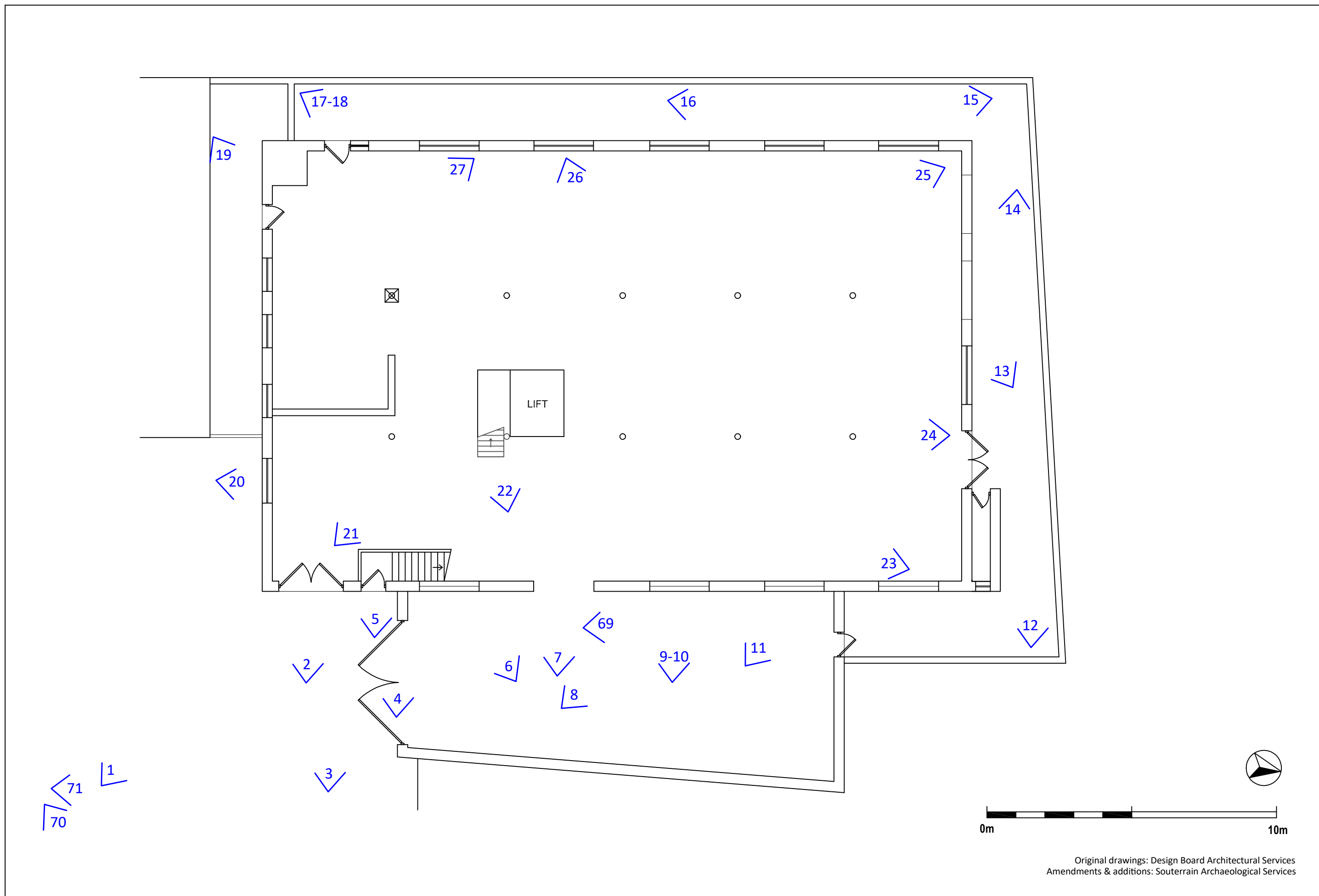
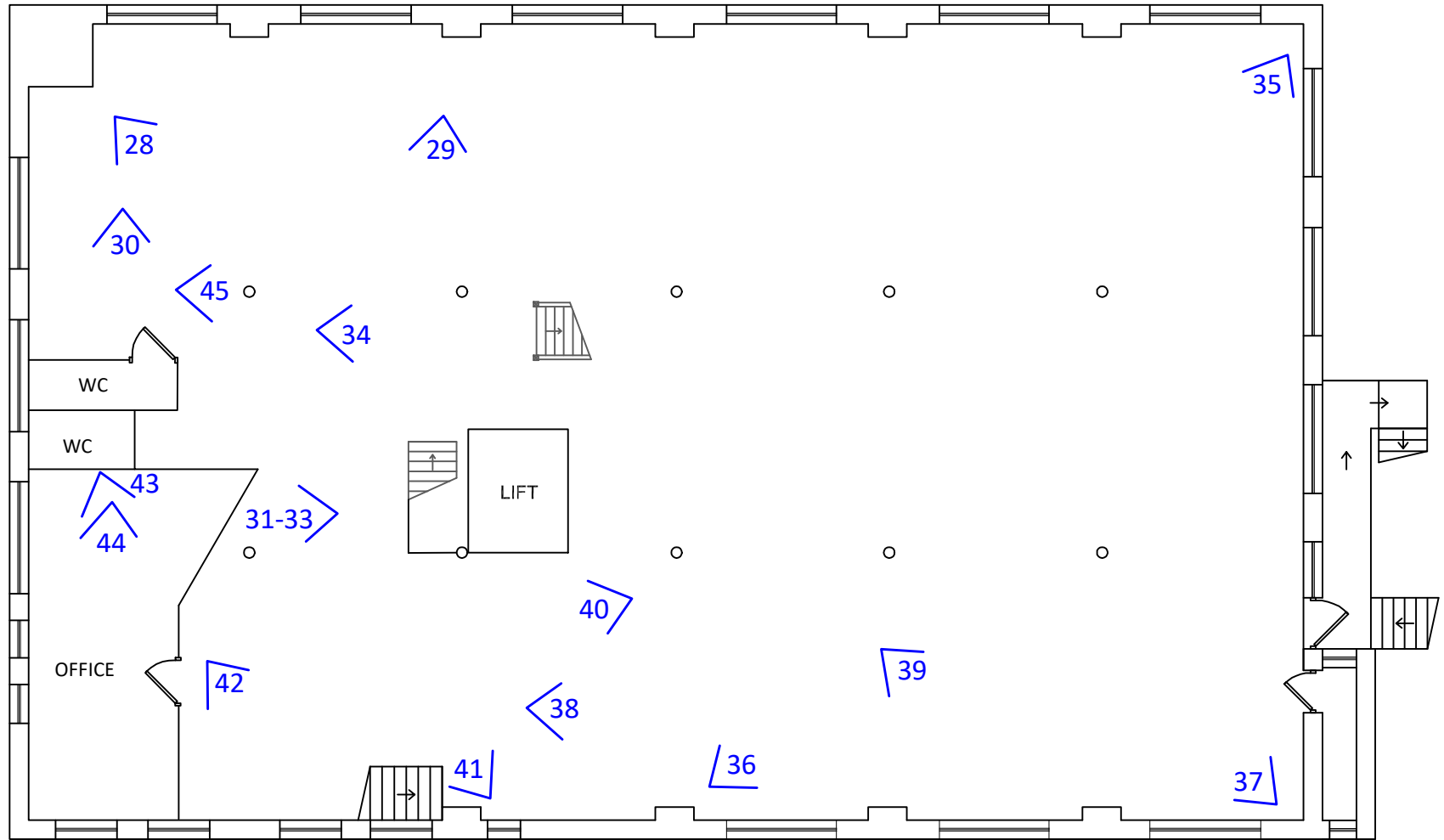
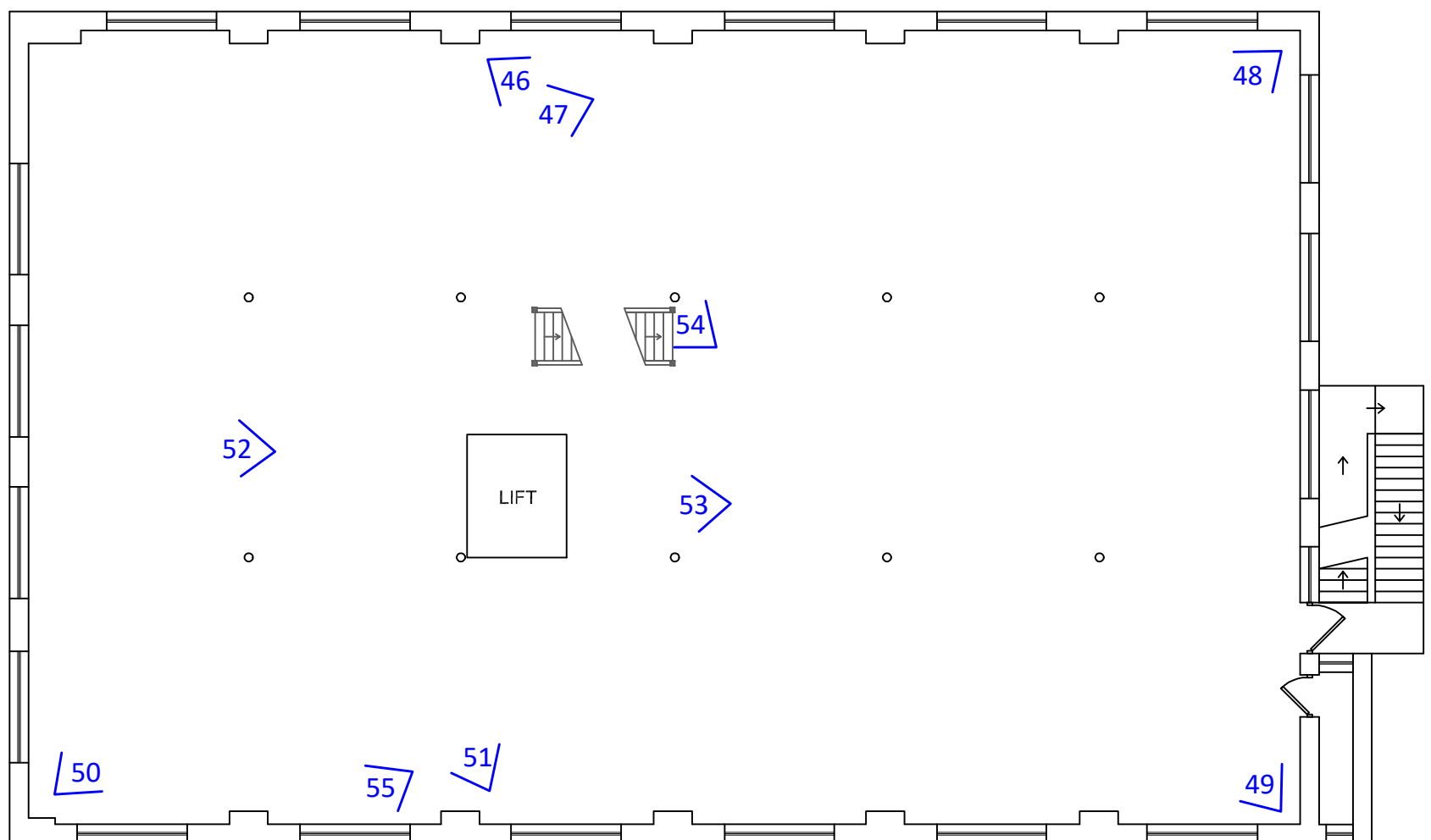


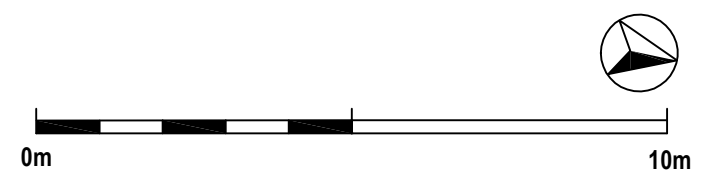
Figure 25: Ground floor plan showing direction of photographs



First floor plan

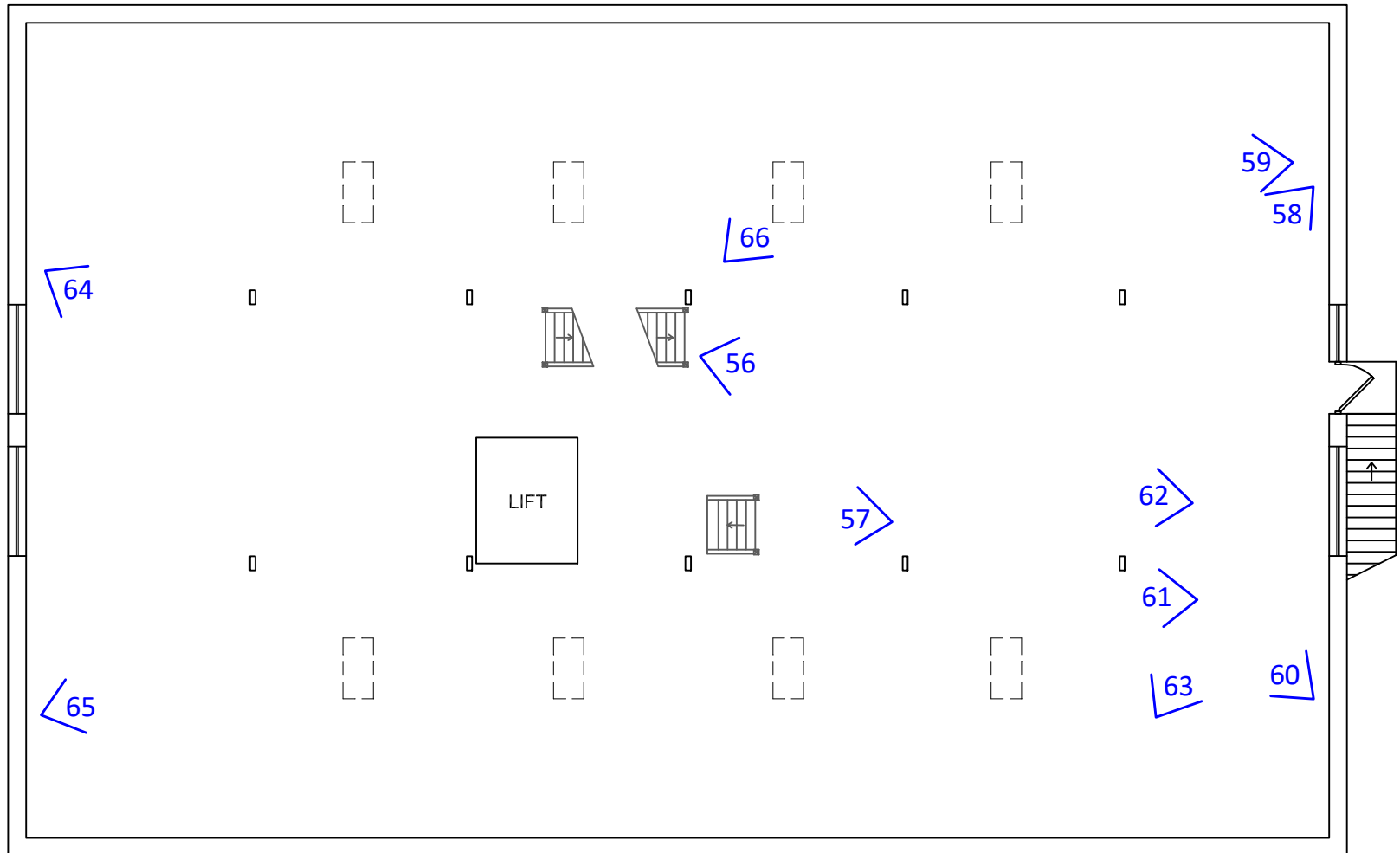


Second floor plan

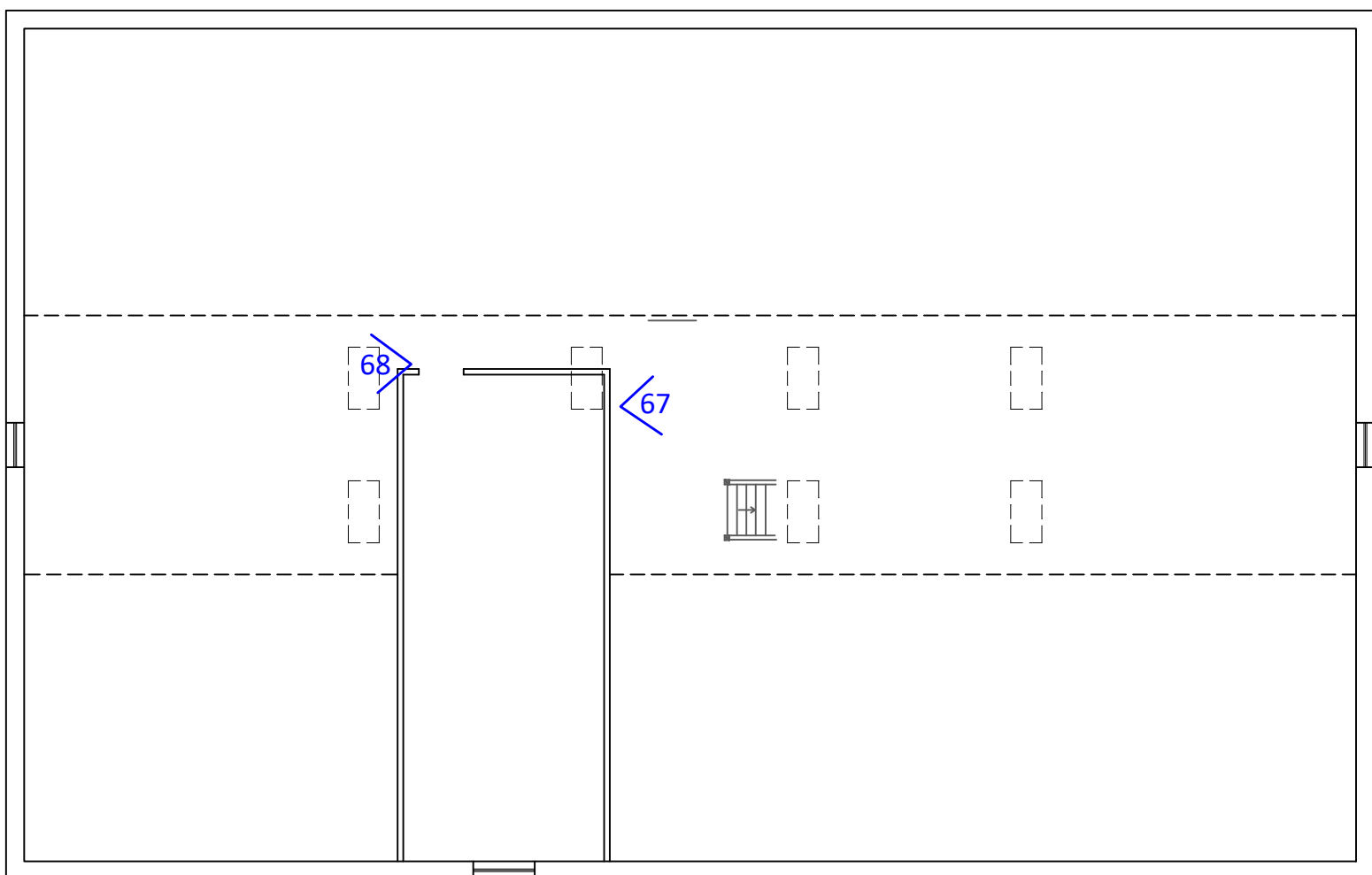


Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
 Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

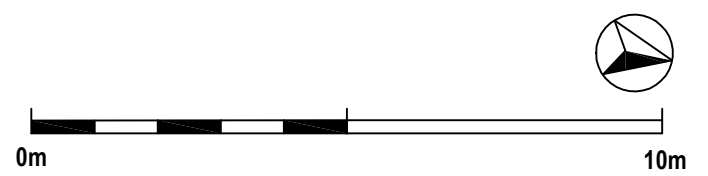
Figure 26: First & second floor plans showing direction of photographs



Third floor plan



Attic plan



Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
 Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

Figure 27: Third floor and attic plans showing direction of photographs



0m Scale 1:100 10m

Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

Figure 28: Front elevation (East)



0m Scale 1:100 10m

Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

Figure 29: Rear elevation (West)



0m Scale 1:100 10m

Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

Figure 30: End elevation (South)



0m Scale 1:100 10m

Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

Figure 31: End elevation (North)

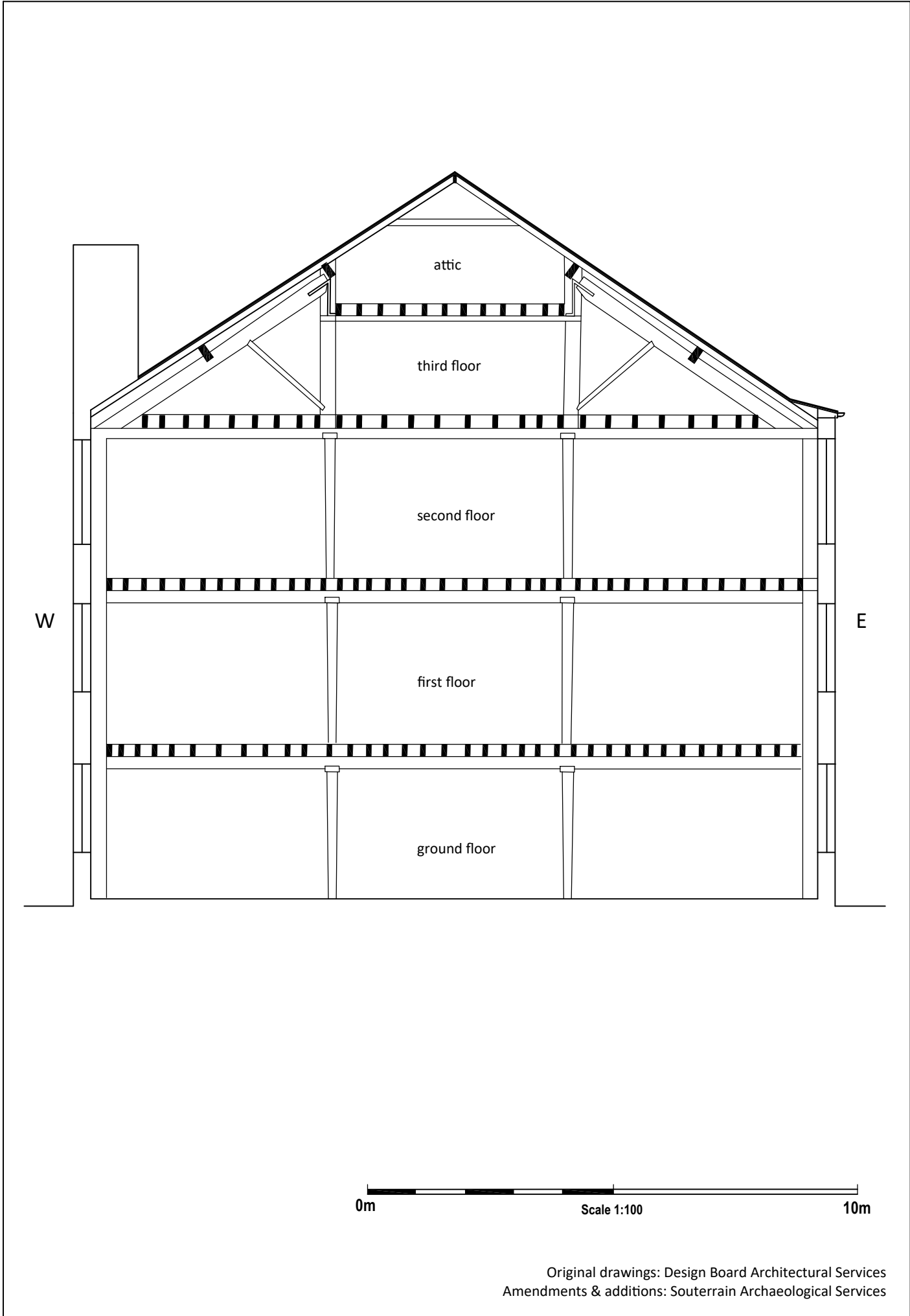


Figure 32: Section (East-West)

Original drawings: Design Board Architectural Services
Amendments & additions: Souterrain Archaeological Services

11. Photographs: 2019



1. General view of the Dickens Bros. Ltd. factory from the courtyard off Kettering Road. Facing NW



3. Main entrance to the factory. Facing WSW



4. Front door. Facing WSW



2. Hand-painted signage above the factory and main/finished goods door. Facing SW



6. Front elevation. Facing SW



5. Limited company brass door plaque

7. Goods entrance. Facing WSW

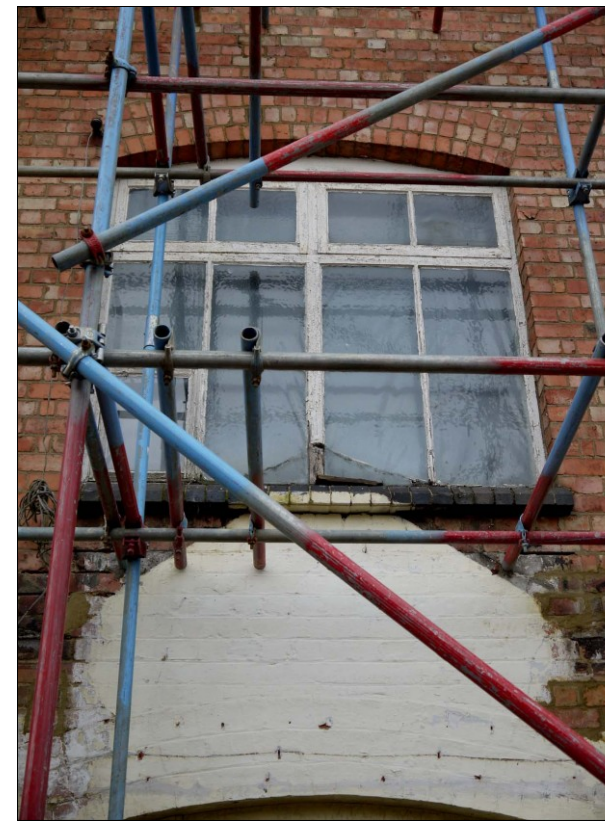




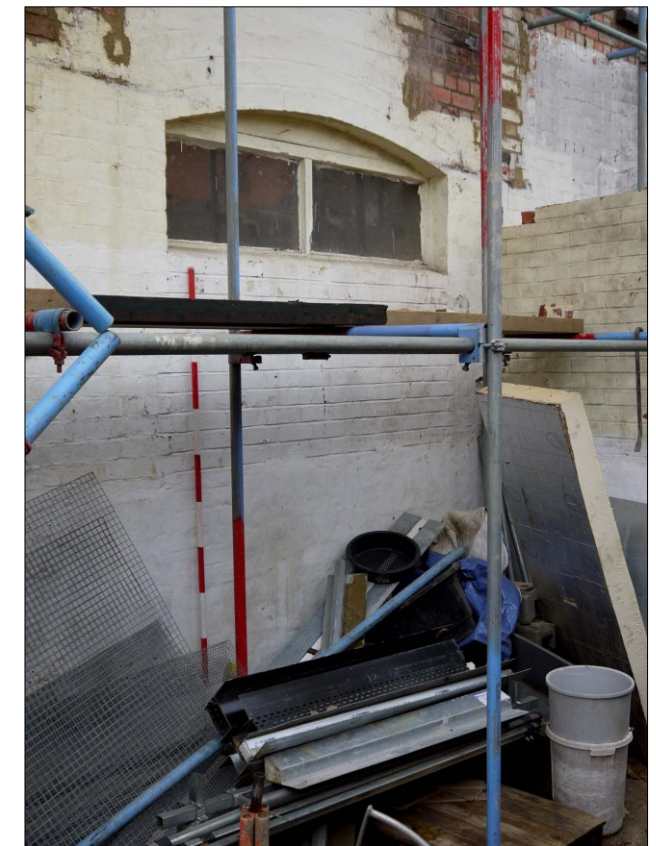
8. Front elevation. Facing NW



9. Front elevation. Typical ground floor window. Facing WSW



10. Front elevation. Typical first floor window. Facing WSW



11. Front elevation. Half-blocked window on ground floor. Facing NW



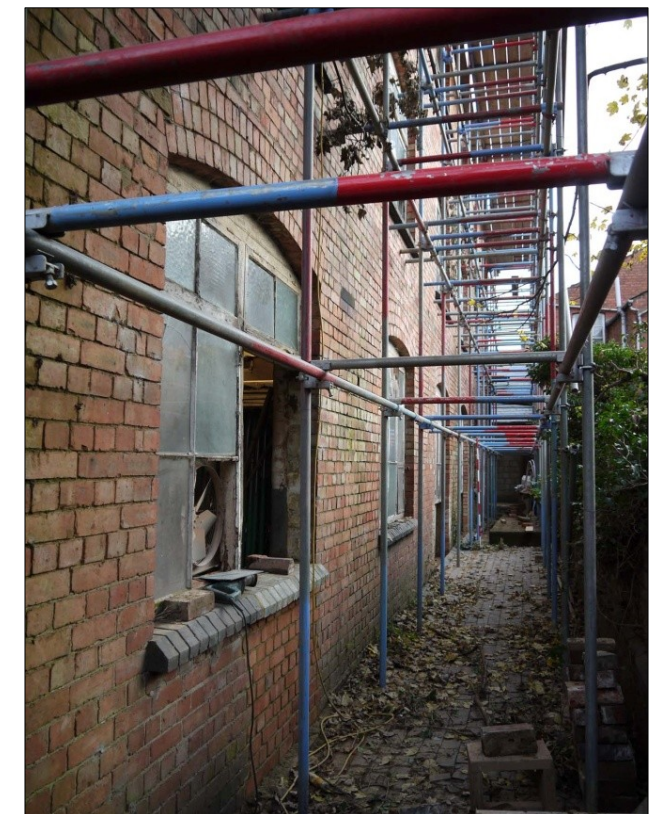
12. NW End, overview. (Fire escape attached to boundary wall). Facing SW



13. NW End. Typical ground floor window. Facing WSW



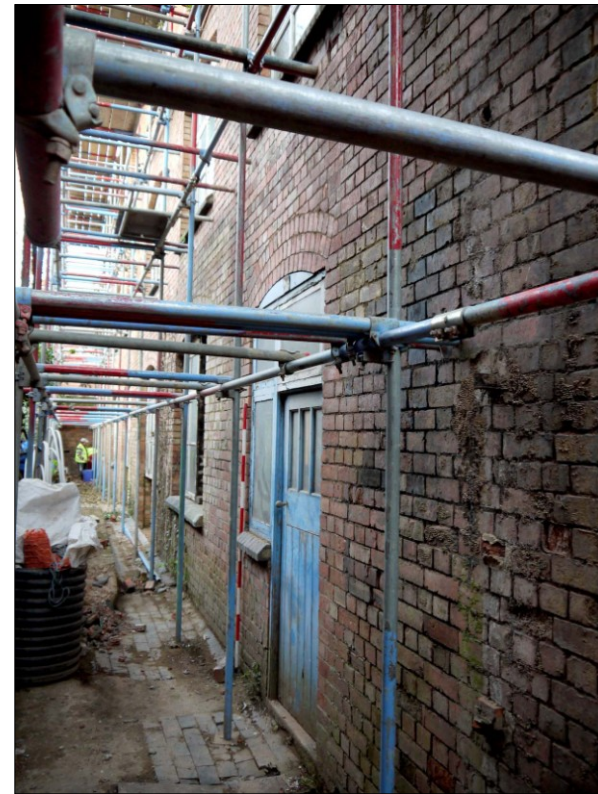
14. NW End view. Facing ENE



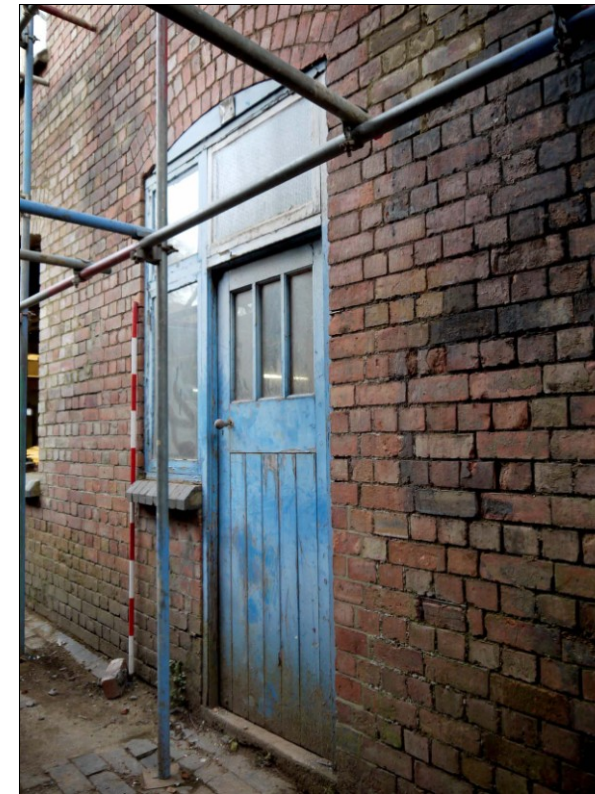
15. Rear elevation. Ground floor overview. Facing SSE



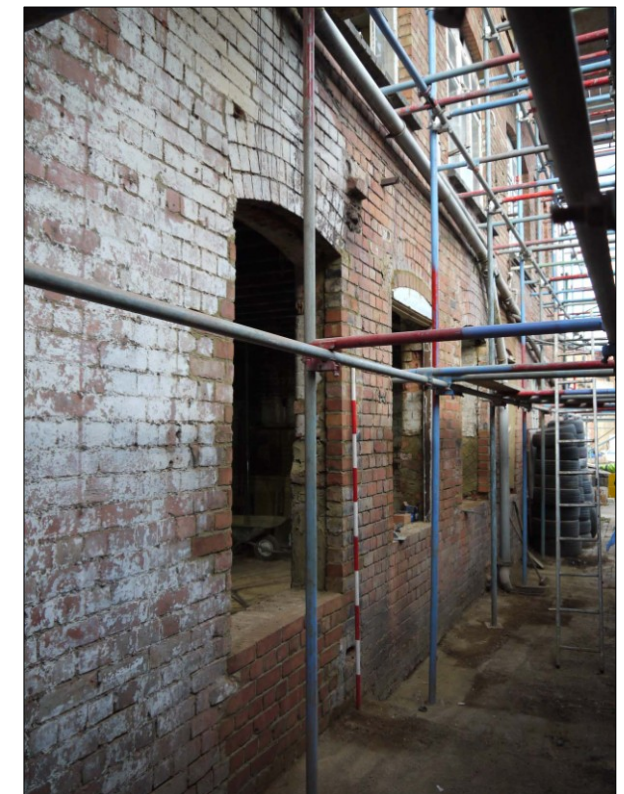
16. Rear elevation. Typical ground floor window. Facing N



17. Rear elevation, overview. Facing N



18. Rear elevation. Rear door. Facing N



19. SE End, overview. Facing NE

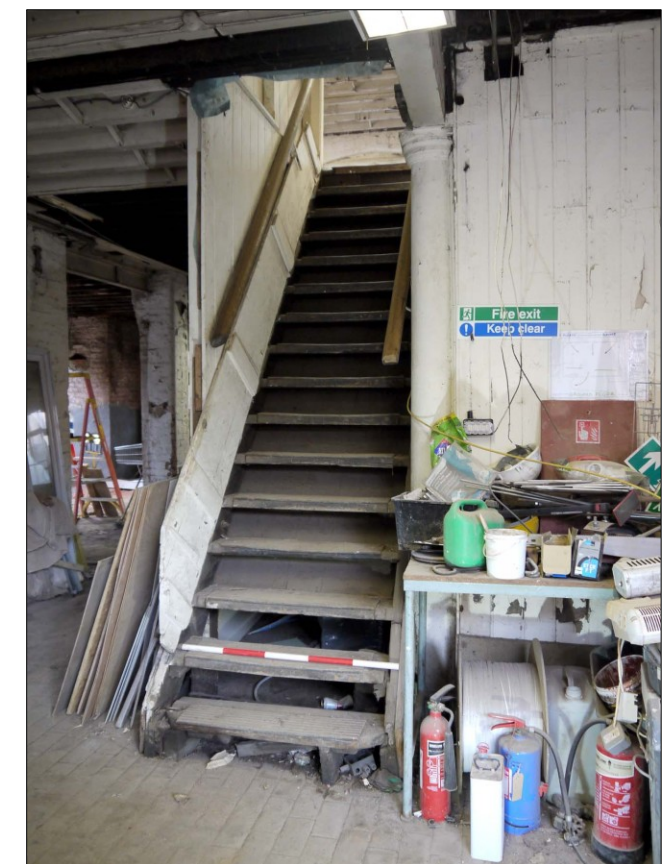
GROUND FLOOR



20. SE End. Metal-framed window. Facing NNW



21. Ground Floor. Main access to floors. Lift shaft behind. Facing NW



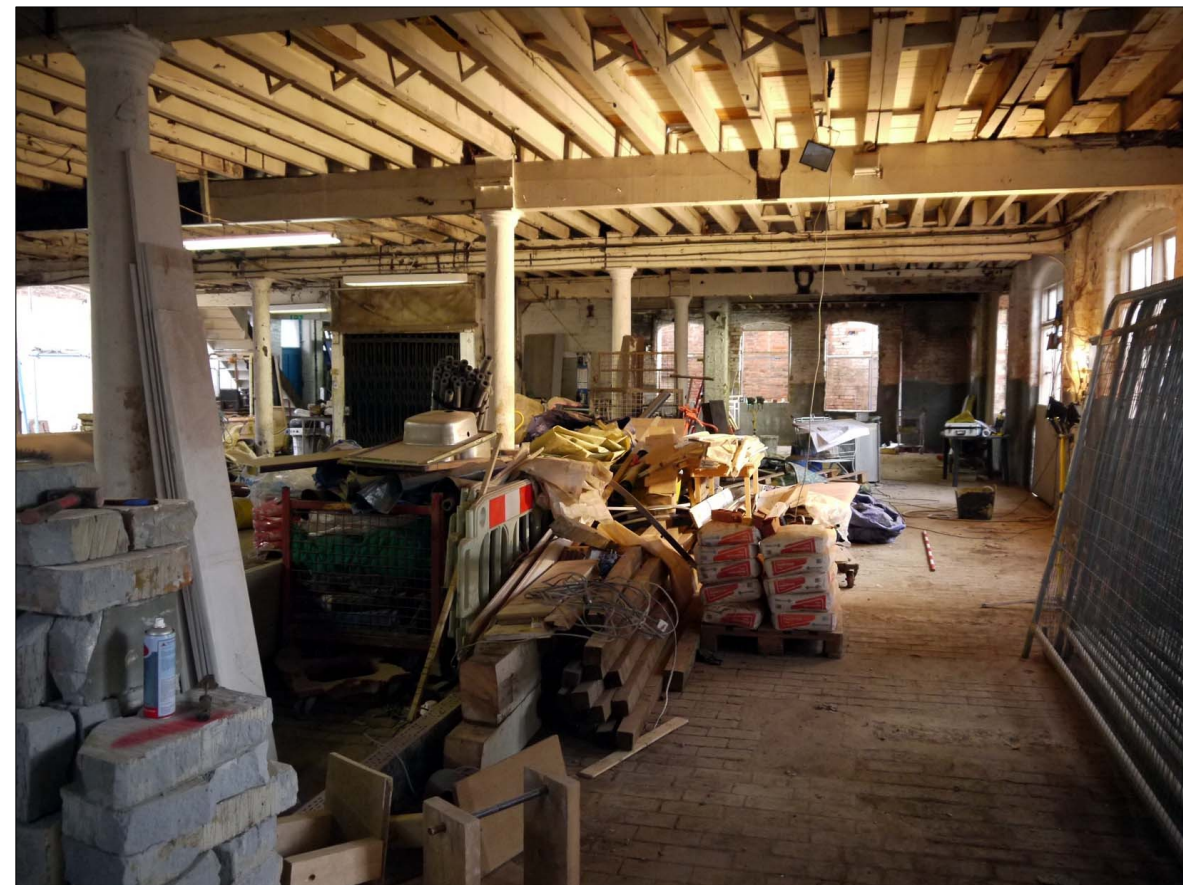
22. Ground Floor. Main stair to floors, with hinged materials ramp to L; lift shaft to R. Facing SW



23. Ground Floor, overview. Facing SSW



24. Ground Floor, overview. Facing SSE



25. Ground Floor, overview. Facing SSE



26. Ground Floor, overview. Facing NE

27. Ground Floor.
SE End, workshop
windows.
Facing SE



29. First Floor. View towards office area. Stairs to L. Facing E

FIRST FLOOR



28. First Floor
overview.
Facing NNE



30. First Floor. W.C. Facing ENE



31. Late C19/ early C19 fire resisting safe made by the Milner Safe Co. Liverpool



32. Brass plaque.
Milners (212) Patent
Fire Resisting



33. Milners Safe
brass lock panel



35. First Floor. Overview of NW end. Facing NE



34. First Floor. Stair to Second Floor. Facing NW



36. First Floor. Overview of NW end. Facing NW



37. First Floor. Overview. Facing SW



38. First Floor. Overview. Facing NW



39. First Floor. Typical window. Front elevation. Facing NNE



40. First Floor. View towards former office area and stair. Facing SE



41. First Floor. Former office area. Former office stair to L. Facing SW



42. First Floor. Former office area. Facing NE



43. First Floor. Office. Facing NE



44. First Floor. Office. Overlooking yard. Facing ENE

SECOND FLOOR



45. First Floor. Column junction between First Floor & Second Floor, Facing NNW



46. Second Floor. Overview of NW end. Stair to R. Facing NNE



47. Second Floor. Overview of SE end. Stair to L. Facing SE



48. Second Floor. Overview. Facing SSE



49. Second Floor. Overview. Facing SSW



50. Second Floor. Overview from SE end. Lift shaft in centre. Facing NW



51. Second Floor. Overview of SE end. Facing SW



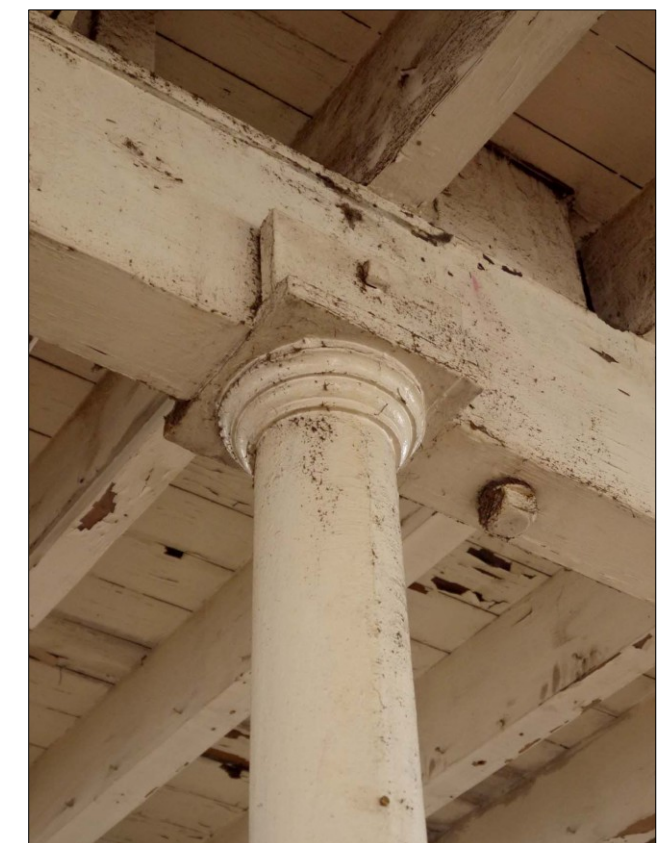
52. Second Floor. SE end. Exposed joists with herring bone struts. Facing SSE



53. Second Floor. Lift with concertina gate. Facing SSE



55. Second Floor. Typical wrought iron window stay (late C19). Facing SSE



54. Second Floor. Bracket attaching column capital to cross-beam. Bolt securing Third Floor roof truss post to R. Facing SW

THIRD FLOOR



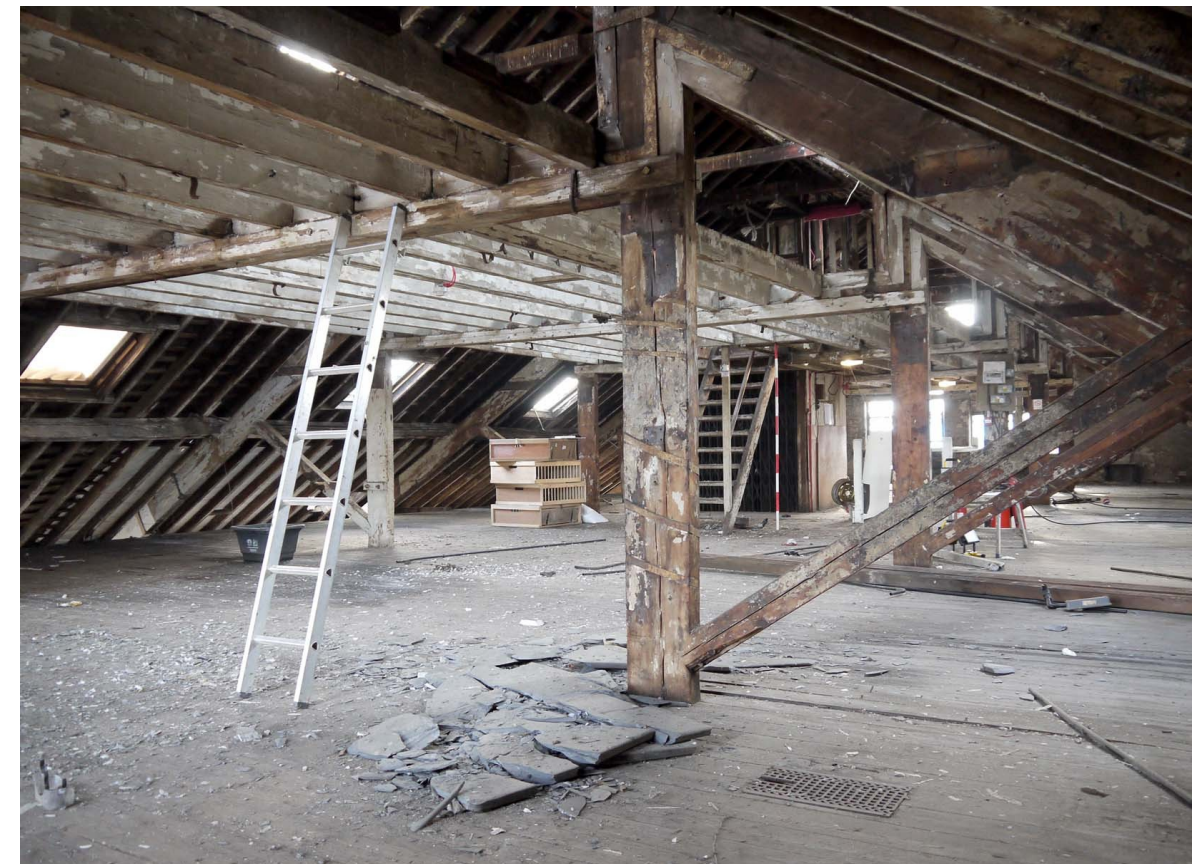
56. Third Floor. Overview of NW end from top of stair. Stair to Fourth Floor at R (Floorboards have been removed on Fourth Floor). Facing NNE



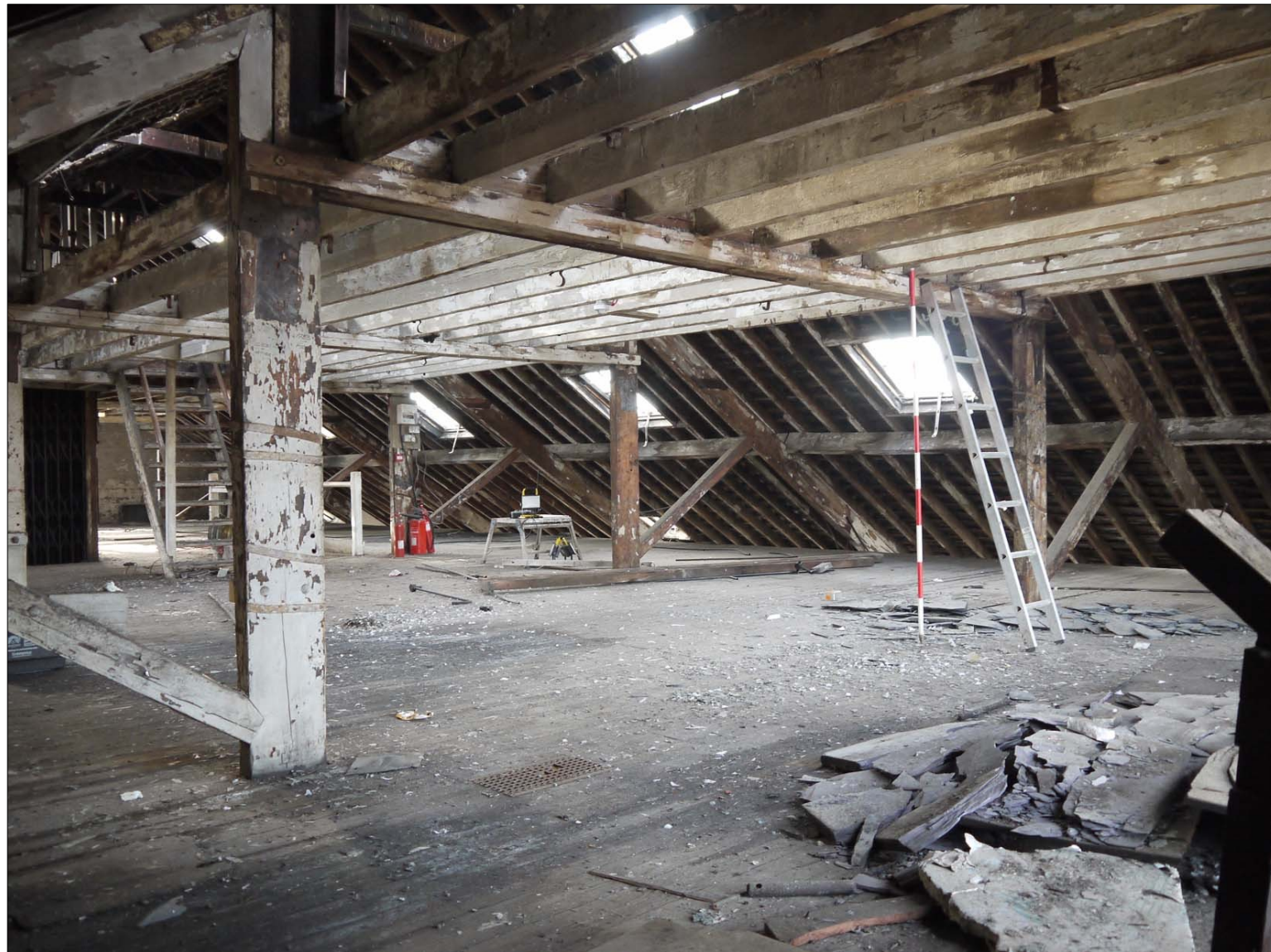
57. Third Floor. Landing area. Facing SE



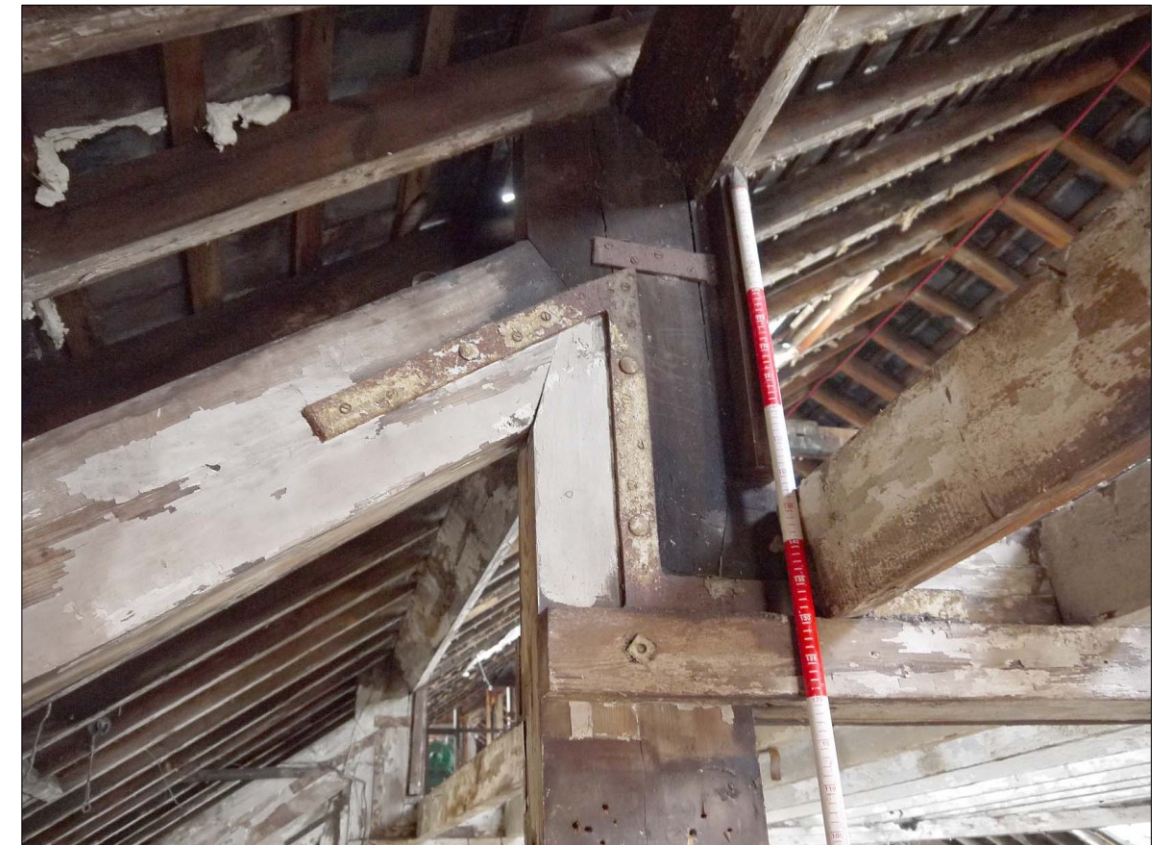
58. Third Floor. Overview of NW end. Roof truss. Facing SE



59. Third Floor. Overview from NW end. Cast iron floor vent to R of truss post. Facing SW



60. Third Floor. Overview from NW end. Roof trusses. Facing SW



61. Third Floor. Typical truss joint (post-principal rafter). Facing SSW



62. Third Floor.
Typical cast iron floor
vent. Facing SSW



63. Third Floor. Overview of NW end. Fire exit. Facing NW



64. Third Floor. Overview of SE end and truss. Lift shaft background centre. Facing NE



65. Third Floor. Overview of SE end and truss. Lift shaft background R. Facing NW

FOURTH FLOOR



66. Third Floor. Typical casement roof light. Facing NW



67. Fourth Floor and roof frame (floor boards removed). Facing NNW



68. Fourth Floor and roof frame (floor boards removed). Facing SSE



69. C19 factory line shaft and belt drive wheel. Facing NW



70. The rear of the entrance to Kettering Place from Kettering Road. Facing NE



71. Former warehouse/ later works canteen. Facing N



72. Entrance to Kettering Place from Kettering Road. Facing SW

APPENDIX 1. PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX

(REPORT & ARCHIVE: CD)

| PROJECT: ENN109702, Former Dickens Bros. Ltd., Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| No. in report | Image No. | Direction (facing) | Description | Date |
| Building Exterior | | | | |
| 1 | 1-IMG_2484 | NW | General view of the Dickens Bros. Ltd. factory from the courtyard off Kettering Road | 26.10.2019 |
| 2 | 2-IMG_2960 | SW | Hand-painted signage above the factory and main/finished goods door | 20.11.2019 |
| 3 | 3-P1160610 | WSW | Main entrance to the factory | 20.11.2019 |
| 4 | 4-P1160602 | WSW | Front door | 20.11.2019 |
| 5 | 5-IMG_2958 | - | Limited company brass door plaque | 20.11.2019 |
| 6 | 6-P1160617 | SW | Front elevation | 20.11.2019 |
| 7 | 7-P1160611 | WSW | Goods entrance/exit | 20.11.2019 |
| 8 | 8-P1160615 | NW | Front elevation. Overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 9 | 9-P1160635 | WSW | Front elevation. Typical ground floor window | 20.11.2019 |
| 10 | 10-P1160636 | WSW | Front elevation. Typical first floor window | 20.11.2019 |
| 11 | 11-P1160638 | NW | Front elevation. Half-blocked window on ground floor | 20.11.2019 |
| 12 | 12-P1160622 | SW | NW End, overview. (Fire escape attached to boundary wall). | 20.11.2019 |
| 13 | 13-P1160624 | WSW | NW End. Typical ground floor window | 20.11.2019 |
| 14 | 14-P1160629 | ENE | NW End view | 20.11.2019 |
| 15 | 15-P1160647 | SSE | Rear elevation. Ground floor overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 16 | 16-P1160645 | N | Rear elevation. Typical ground floor window | 20.11.2019 |
| 17 | 17-P1160649 | N | Rear elevation, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 18 | 18-P1160652 | N | Rear elevation. Rear door | 20.11.2019 |
| 19 | 19-P1160656 | NE | SE End, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 20 | 20-P1160662 | NNW | SE End. Metal-framed window | 20.11.2019 |
| Ground Floor | | | | |
| 21 | 21-P1160572 | NW | Ground Floor. Main access to floors. Lift shaft behind | 20.11.2019 |
| 22 | 22-P1160576 | SW | Ground Floor. Main stair to floors, with hinged materials ramp to L; lift shaft to R | 20.11.2019 |
| 23 | 23-P1160578 | SSW | Ground Floor, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 24 | 24-IMG_2941 | SSE | Ground Floor, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 25 | 25-P1160589 | SSE | Ground Floor, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 26 | 26-P1160583 | NE | Ground Floor, overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 27 | 27-P1160580 | SE | Ground Floor. SE End, workshop windows | 20.11.2019 |
| 28 | 28-P1160523 | NNE | First Floor overview | 20.11.2019 |
| First Floor | | | | |
| 29 | 29-P1160529 | E | First Floor. View towards office area. Stairs to L | 20.11.2019 |

| PROJECT: ENN109702, Former Dickens Bros. Ltd., Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| No. in report | Image No. | Direction (facing) | Description | Date |
| 30 | 30-IMG_5023 | ENE | | 20.11.2019 |
| 31 | 31-P1160530 | SE | The company safe. Early C19 fire resistant safe made by the Milner Safe Co. Liverpool | 20.11.2019 |
| 32 | 32-P1160533 | - | Brass plaque. Milners (212) Patent Fire Resisting | 20.11.2019 |
| 33 | 33-P1160536 | - | Milners Safe brass lock panel | 20.11.2019 |
| 34 | 34-P1160538 | NW | First Floor. Stair to Second Floor | 20.11.2019 |
| 35 | 35-P1160539 | NE | First Floor. Overview of NW end. | 20.11.2019 |
| 36 | 36-P1160547 | NW | First Floor. Overview of NW end | 20.11.2019 |
| 37 | 37-P1160558 | SW | First Floor. Overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 38 | 38-P1160548 | NW | First Floor. Overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 39 | 39-P1160544 | NNE | First Floor. Typical window. Front elevation | 20.11.2019 |
| 40 | 40-P1160551 | SE | First Floor. View towards former office area and stair | 20.11.2019 |
| 41 | 41-P1160569 | SW | First Floor. Former office area. Former office stair to L | 20.11.2019 |
| 42 | 42-P1160552 | NE | First Floor. Former office area | 20.11.2019 |
| 43 | 43-P1160561 | NE | First Floor. Office. Facing NE | 20.11.2019 |
| 44 | 44-P1160565 | ENE | First Floor. Office. Overlooking yard. Facing NE | 20.11.2019 |
| 45 | 45-P1160681 | NNW | First Floor. Column junction between First Floor & Second Floor | 20.11.2019 |
| Second Floor | | | | |
| 46 | 46-P1160521 | NNE | Second Floor. Overview of NW end. Stair to R. | 20.11.2019 |
| 47 | 47-P1160494 | SE | Second Floor. Overview of SE end. Stair to L | 20.11.2019 |
| 48 | 48-P1160497 | SSE | Second Floor. Overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 49 | 49-P1160501 | SSW | Second Floor. Overview | 20.11.2019 |
| 50 | 50-P1160508 | NW | Second Floor. Overview from SE end. Lift shaft in centre | 20.11.2019 |
| 51 | 51-P1160502 | SW | Second Floor. Overview of SE end | 20.11.2019 |
| 52 | 52-P1160513 | SSE | Second Floor. SE end. Exposed joists with herring bone struts | 20.11.2019 |
| 53 | 53-P1160514 | SSE | Second Floor. Lift with concertina gate | 20.11.2019 |
| 54 | 54-P1160518 | SW | Second Floor. Bracket attaching column capital to cross-beam. Bolt securing Third Floor post to R. | 20.11.2019 |
| 55 | 55-IMG_2929 | SSE | Typical wrought iron window stay (late C19). | 20.11.2019 |
| Third Floor | | | | |
| 56 | 56-P1160490 | NNE | Third Floor. Overview of NW end from top of stair. Stair to Fourth Floor at R (Floorboards have been removed on Fourth Floor) | 20.11.2019 |
| 57 | 57-IMG_4971 | SE | Third Floor. Landing area | 20.11.2019 |
| 58 | 58-P1160454 | SE | Third Floor. Overview of NW end | 20.11.2019 |
| 59 | 59-P1160457 | SE | Third Floor. Overview from NW end. Grilled iron floor vent to R of truss post. | 20.11.2019 |
| 60 | 60-P1160458 | SW | Third Floor. Overview from NW end. Roof trusses. | 20.11.2019 |
| 61 | 61-P1160461 | SSW | Third Floor. Typical truss joint (post-principal rafter) | 20.11.2019 |

| PROJECT: ENN109702, Former Dickens Bros. Ltd., Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| No. in report | Image No. | Direction (facing) | Description | Date |
| 62 | 62-IMG_2876 | SSW | Third Floor. Typical cast iron floor vent. | 20.11.2019 |
| 63 | 63-P1160467 | NW | Third Floor. Overview of NW end. Fire exit | 20.11.2019 |
| 64 | 64-P1160479 | NE | Third Floor. Overview of SE end and truss. Lift shaft background centre | 20.11.2019 |
| 65 | 65-P1160482 | NW | Third Floor. Overview of SE end and truss. Lift shaft background R | 20.11.2019 |
| 66 | 66-P1160470 | NW | Third Floor. Typical casement roof light | 20.11.2019 |
| Fourth Floor | | | | |
| 67 | 67-IMG_4983 | NNW | Fourth Floor and roof frame (floor boards removed). | 20.11.2019 |
| 68 | 68-P1160485 | SSE | Fourth Floor and roof frame (floor boards removed). | 20.11.2019 |
| Other | | | | |
| 69 | 69-P1160673 | NW | C19 factory line shaft and belt drive wheel | 20.11.2019 |
| 70 | 70-P1160591 | NE | The rear of the entrance to Kettering Place from Kettering Road | 20.11.2019 |
| 71 | 71-P1160672-R | N | Former warehouse/ later works canteen | 20.11.2019 |
| 72 | 72-P1170112 | SW | Entrance to Kettering Place from Kettering Road | 23.01.2020 |

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OASIS ID: souterra1-382056 | |
| Project details | |
| Project name | Former Dickens Brothers Ltd Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton |
| Short description of the project | In November 2019, a former leather manufactory building in Northampton was recorded prior to its conversion to residential apartments. Formerly known as Dickens Brothers Ltd., the factory was purpose-built in 1900. It was located a short distance to the east of the town centre, an area characterised by rows of late 19th century terraced houses, interspersed with large contemporary edifices - boot and shoe factories, schools and places of non-conformist worship. It is situated in the Northampton Boot and Shoe Conservation Area. The business was run by the same family until its closure in 2019 and was one of the UK's longest operating leather producers. The factory is a rectangular three storey building with gabled ends. It is typically built in red brick, roofed in Welsh slate, and has blue brick door jambs and window sills. A main architectural design feature of the building's interior is a twin colonnade of cast-iron columns, on three levels, which provide the main internal structural support system up to third floor level. The report greatly expands on a preliminary study of the building and record of its exterior, made by English Heritage in the course of the 'Northamptonshire Boot and Shoe Industry Rapid Survey' (1999). Principally, the present study derives information about the building's historical context from an interview held during the course of research, with Mr Brian Roy Dickens, former director of Dickens Brothers. The report includes a number of detailed photographs, of leather-production operations inside the factory, which taken in 1929 to mark the company's 20th anniversary. The report provides a descriptive and illustrative account of the building's interior and exterior in its present 'as found' state by means of photographic catalogue, scaled elevations and plans. |
| Project dates | Start: 20-11-2019 End: 20-01-2020 |
| Previous/future work | Yes / No |
| Assoc. project ref. code | ENN109702 - HER event no. |
| Assoc. project ref. code | SOU19-675 - Contracting Unit No. |
| Assoc. project ref. code | N/2018/1238 - Planning Application No. |
| Type of project | Building Recording |
| Site status | Conservation Area |
| Current Land use | Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial |
| Monument type | LEATHER FACTORY Modern |
| Significant Finds | N/A None |
| Methods & techniques | "Measured Survey", "Photographic Survey" |
| Prompt | National Planning Policy Framework - NPPF |
| Prompt | Conservation Area Consent |
| Project location | |
| Country | England |
| Site location | NORTHAMPTONSHIRE NORTHAMPTON Former Dickens Brothers Ltd Leather Manufactory |
| Postcode | NN1 4AP |
| Study area | 392 Square metres |

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Site coordinates | SP 476109 261003 51.930943101772 -1.307468970212 51 55 51 N 001 18 26 W Point |
| Height OD / Depth | Min: 86.25m Max: 86.25m |
| Project creators | |
| Name of Organisation | Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd |
| Project brief originator | Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body |
| Project design originator | Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd |
| Project manager | M D Wilson |
| Project supervisor | M Wilson |
| Type of /funding body | Developer |
| Name of /funding body | Elsevier Group Ltd |
| Project archives | |
| Physical Archive Exists? | No |
| Digital Archive recipient | Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record |
| Digital Archive ID | ENN109702 |
| Digital Contents | "none" |
| Digital Media available | "Images raster / digital photography" |
| Paper Archive recipient | Northamptonshire Historic Environment Record |
| Paper Archive ID | ENN109702 |
| Paper Contents | "none" |
| Paper Media available | "Report" |
| Project bibliography 1 | |
| Publication type | Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript) |
| Title | Former Dickens Brothers Ltd Leather Manufactory, Kettering Road, Northampton |
| Authors | Wilson, M.D and Planas, M |
| Other bibliographic details | SOU19-675 |
| Date | 2020 |
| Issuer or publisher | Souterrain Archaeological Services Ltd |
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