



Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd

Modern living in an historic environment

Building Recording at 42-54 Broad Street, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire

Joe Prentice and Charlotte Walker

Building recording at 42-54 Broad Street, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire

Joe Prentice and Charlotte Walker BSc ACIfA

Summary

A former workshop dating to the late 19th century/early 20th century is to be converted into a two bedroom house. The workshop was built at the end of the 19th century and is contemporary with two nearby brick cottages on Broad Street. The workshop was built as a response to the growing boot and shoe industry at the time, when other similar developments, both large and small, were taking place around the village. Building recording of the house to English Heritage Level II standards was undertaken to satisfy a condition applied to the planning permission.

Introduction

Full Planning Consent was granted by Wellingborough Council to Mrs K Betts and family for the erection of two new houses and alongside them, the redevelopment by conversion of a former workshop on land to the rear of 42-54 Broad Street, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire, (NGR: SP 854 637; Fig 1). Wellingborough Council, in partnership with Northamptonshire County Council, applied a condition for the archaeological building recording of the former workshop. A Written Scheme of Investigation setting out the scope and strategy of the proposed building recording was prepared by Iain Soden Heritage Services Ltd and approved by the Northamptonshire County Council Assistant Archaeological Advisor prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

Site location, geology and topography

Earls Barton is situated between the towns of Northampton and Wellingborough on the north side of the Nene Valley. The current site lies within the historic village of Earls Barton, to the east of the church. The site currently comprises a small former boot and shoe workshop situated to the rear of houses fronting onto Broad Street. Two further houses are currently being built to the rear of the workshop, which is accessed via an entryway to the side of no 54 Broad Street.

The site itself is broadly flat, likely to have been levelled during successive periods of development, since Broad Street has a slight fall to the west and the land to its south falls away locally. It lies at around 80m above Ordnance Datum. The bedrock geology of the site is recorded as part of the Whitby Mudstone Formation with deposits of Northampton Sand to the north, east and west; no superficial deposits are noted (<http://BGS.ac.uk>).

Broad Street, Earls Barton

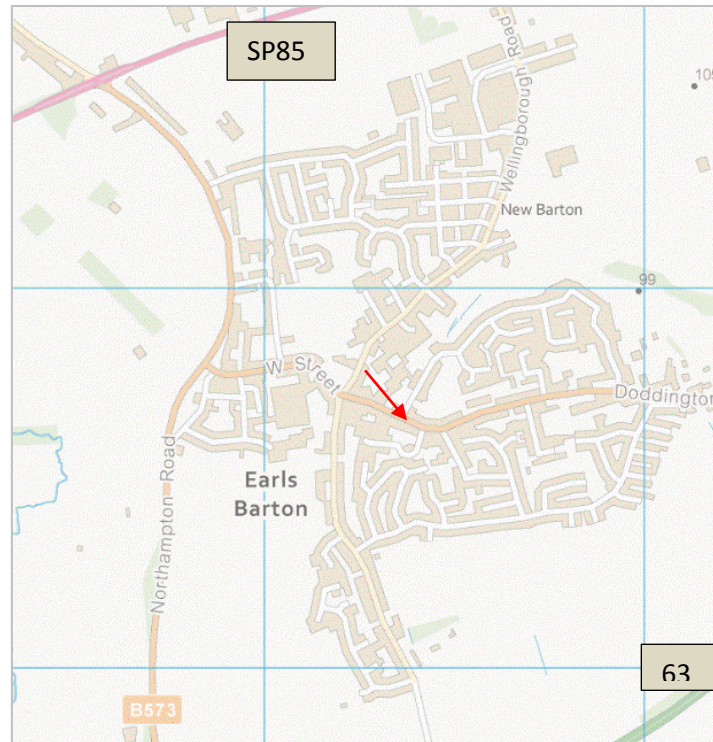


Fig 1: Site location (arrowed). Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015

The former boot and shoe workshop comprises a small L-shaped, two storey, brick building constructed in a single phase. For the sake of ease in this report it is assumed the side facing the rear of the Broad Street cottages faces north, although true north lies slightly to the west.

History

The plot on which the workshop lies was empty in 1838, although some stone buildings to the south-east were already present (Fig 2). The owner of the land appears to have been William Simpson. By 1885 a number of buildings had been constructed on the plot, including a small building on the frontage and a larger one to the rear (Fig 3).

By 1899, both these buildings had been replaced by two houses on the frontage, Bridgeway House and Langton House, and the workshop to the rear. There was a further small building adjoining the southern elevation of the workshop (Fig 4). No evidence of this is currently observable on the surviving building due to the presence of render. This small building had been demolished by 1969.

Broad Street, Earls Barton



Fig 2: 1838 Inclosure map of Earls Barton

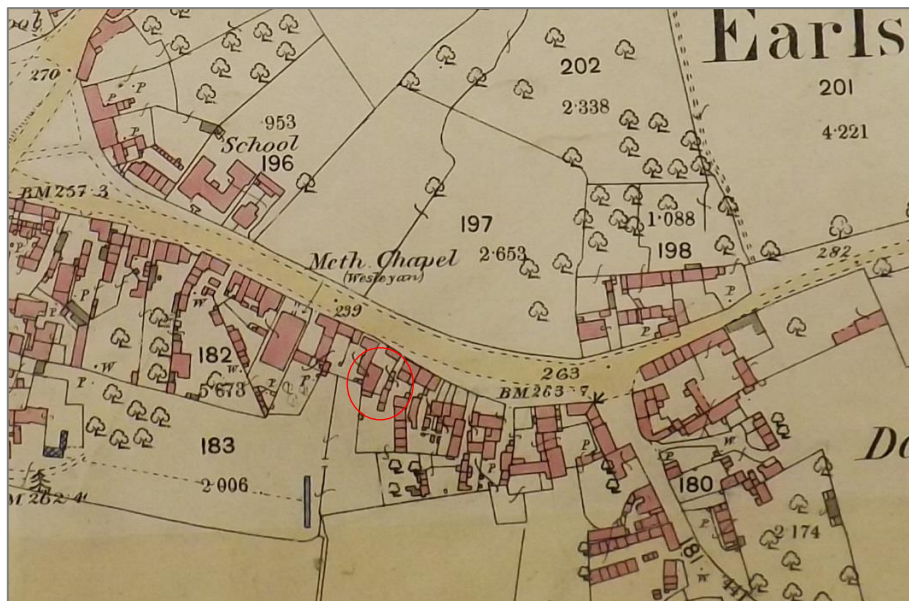


Fig 3: First Edition Ordnance Survey map, 1885

Broad Street, Earls Barton

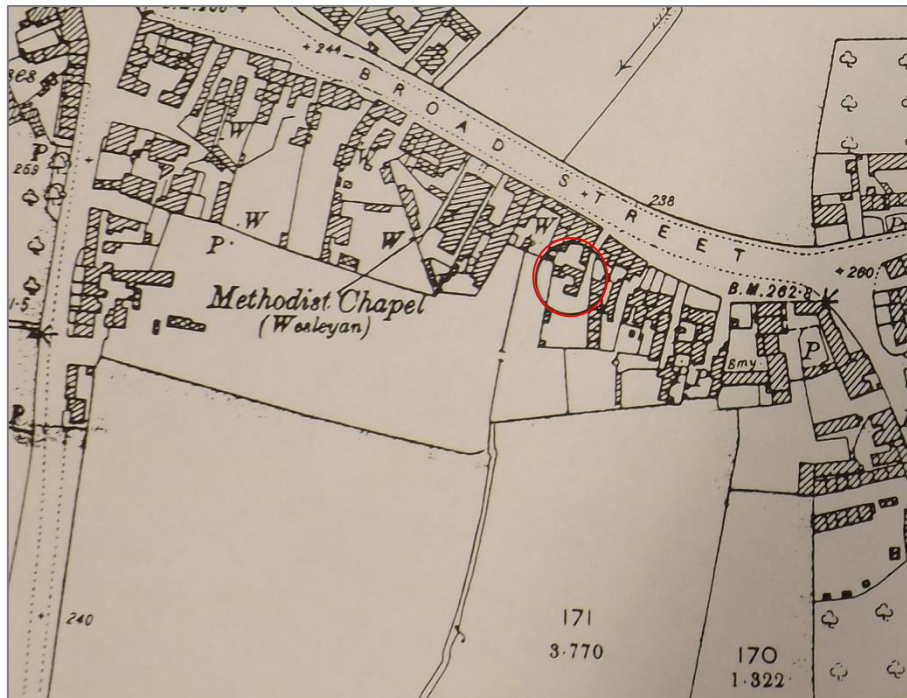


Fig 4: Second Edition Ordnance Survey, 1899

Mr Betts, husband of the current owner, relates that the building was used to produce children's boots and shoes at the beginning of the twentieth century by two brothers who each lived in one of the two brick cottages behind which it is situated. This received wisdom seems to have been correct since in 1929 the workshop was listed in Kelly's Directory of the Shoe Trades as FJ Dunkley (children's shoes). It was known as the 'cack shop', 'cacks' being children's shoes (Palmer 2006). The Dunkleys were a significant family within the Earls Barton shoe trade; William Dunkley had been employing 70 people in the village as early as 1851 and a large factory owned by the family was located in Park Street. Mr Betts also relates that during the Second World War the factory was used to produce parts for submarines and a large lathe was installed on the ground floor; this has not been corroborated in records.

The building was subject to brief recording during the English Heritage *Northamptonshire Boot and Shoe Industry Rapid Survey* in 2000. At the time of the survey the workshop was in a similar condition as now, although it was reported that a small toilet block, of a later date than the factory, had been demolished at the western end. A small engine block had also been demolished in the re-entrant on the south side.

Building description

Built throughout of red/cream coloured brick (225mm x 110mm x 75mm, 9 x 4 ¼ x 3 inches) bonded in a creamy-white lime mortar laid in a variety of bonds, there is no decorative detail apart from chamfered blue engineering brick laid on edge, used to form simple and effective window sills. All door and window openings have simple painted wood (pine) lintels which at eaves level also double as the wall plate. The roof covering is of Welsh slate, the original material recently re-set on the original timber roof frame.

Broad Street, Earls Barton

East elevation, exterior

This elevation retains what appears to have been the principal entrance and also contains two windows to each of the two floors (Fig 5).



Fig 5: East elevation, looking north

The entrance doorway is situated towards the north end of the East elevation close to the cottages and the alleyway from Broad Street, presumably for easy access to workers and materials-in as well as completed items-out. The doorway appears to retain the original slightly-chamfered doorframe beneath the structural lintel. The door is of narrow vertical planks with chamfered edges and is ledged, but not braced, internally. The door retains parts of a simple iron drop latch superseded by a modern Yale lock.

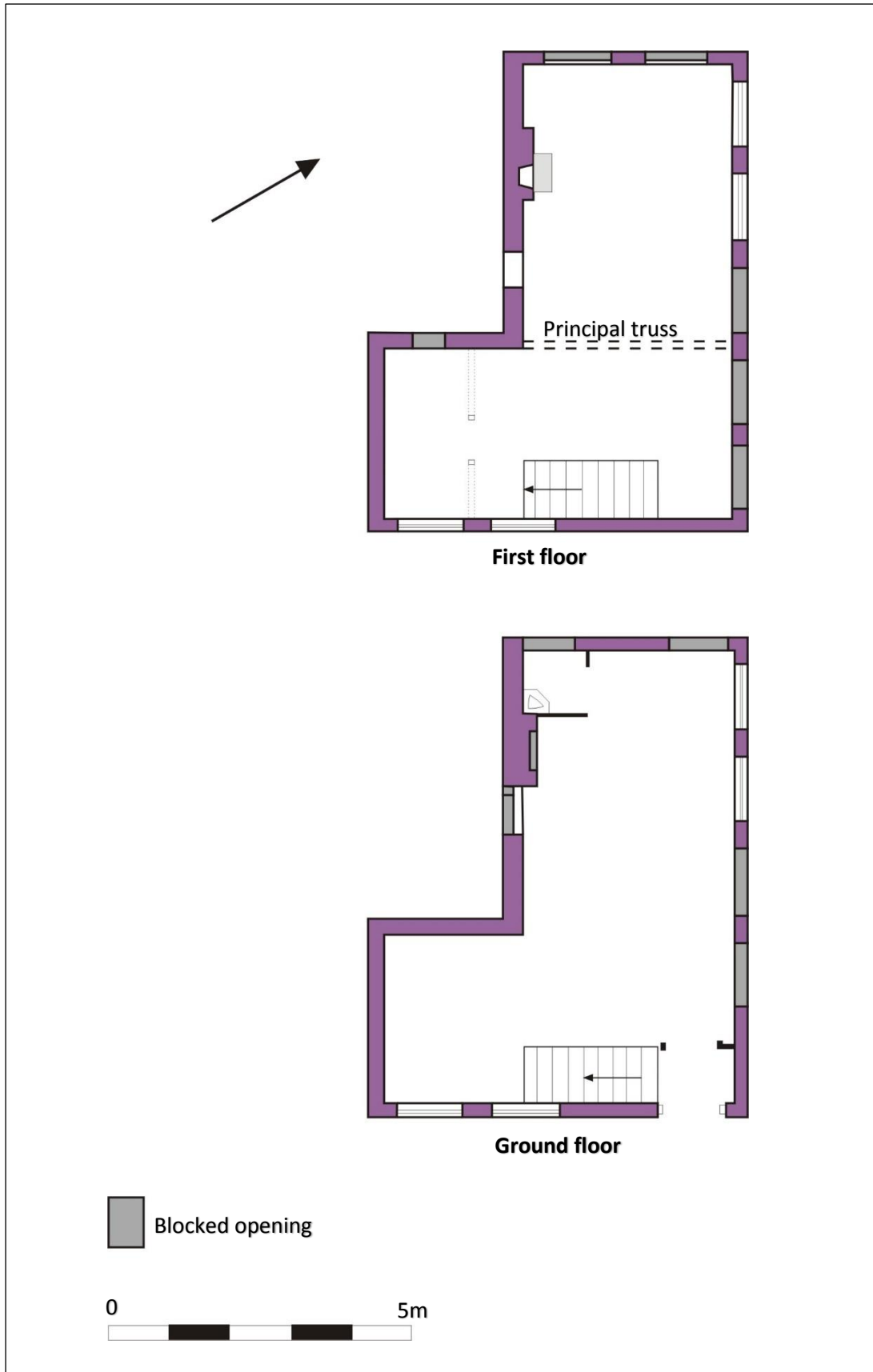


Fig 6: Ground and first floor plans of building

Broad Street, Earls Barton

The only other fixture is a letterbox. The door is hung on simple strap hinges. To the south of the doorway at ground floor level are two windows of equal size set beneath painted pine lintels. Each comprises twenty panes, five wide and four high, the upper centrally positioned six (three wide, two high) opening inwards with a hinge at the bottom, the remainder being fixed. Most, but not all, of the lower ten panes have a shallowly ribbed surface giving a slightly opaque view whilst most, but not all, of the upper half have standard clear glass. All the windows in the building are of the same size and all are glazed in the same way apart from some obvious repairs and so it seems that this form of glazing was a deliberate and most likely original feature; such use of opaque glass was common in factories as it was considered an easy way to stop the staff being distracted by events outside if they did not have a clear view. Its use here may also be a consideration of its proximity to the adjoining properties, particularly if the the original owners lived immediately to the north in the cottages there.

The two first floor windows are located directly above those on the ground floor and are identical in size and style.

North elevation, exterior

Similarly constructed to the east side, this elevation has four windows at ground floor and five at first floor level. They are all of the same size and are glazed in the same way as previously described, all set beneath plain painted pine lintels. Apart from the two easternmost on the ground floor and the three easternmost on the first floor being blocked, this elevation has no other distinguishing features.

West and south elevations, exterior

Currently covered by a cement render the whole of these elevations reveal no evidence of previous fenestration or other openings. However, examination of the interior reveals that the west wall originally had two doorways at ground level and two windows at first floor (Fig 7). The northernmost doorway provided easy access to the houses, while the southernmost doorway led to a later toilet block, which had been demolished by 2002 (recorded as part of the English Heritage Boot and Shoe survey). The render therefore postdates 2002.

Although now blocked, the window openings are of the same size as the others and it must be assumed that they were similarly glazed. Nothing can be said of the doorways since neither frames nor doors survive. The southern elevations (there are two given the L-shape) contained a single wide opening at ground floor on the western arm and nothing on the southern. There was a single west-facing window at first floor level of the southern arm of the building (see below, First floor, interior). The only other feature visible from the south and west sides is the top of the chimney stack located on the south side of the western arm of the building; it has not been rendered and is constructed of the same brick used throughout. No chimney pots remain but there would have been two originally as there was a single fireplace to each floor, each requiring a separate flue.



Fig 7: North and west elevations

Ground floor, interior



Fig 8: Ground floor, looking east



Fig 9: Ground floor, looking north-west

This is a single space and was apparently always so, since there are no signs that it has previously been subdivided (Figs 8 and 9). Entered via the doorway located at the northern end of the east wall, there is a small, and probably original, lobby which gives access to the stairs situated immediately on the left (south) side and straight ahead into the main lower floor area. There was a second door, now missing, although the doorframe and fragments of the vertical planking which would have boxed in this space survive to indicate that the lobby would have been a very cramped space and merely acted as a way of separating the main room from the outside and staircase. Lit by the two east-facing and four north-facing windows (previously described), the room is surprisingly light, but the lack of windows in the south- and west-facing walls was clearly a deliberate design. This was most likely to prevent too harsh sunlight and also overheating during the summer months, north light being preferred for its more uniform level. The floor is of concrete throughout and does not appear to be original.

The staircase is of the most basic design with closed strings and un-moulded treads set on plain risers, all of white-painted pine. The ceiling is simply the underside of the roof joists and floorboards without covering; the joists of a uniform 9 x 3 inch (230mm x 75mm) machine-sawn pine, spaced approximately 12 inches apart, all painted white. In the south-west corner a secondary washroom has been inserted; it comprises a simple frame with a doorframe (the door now missing) in the north side. The remainder is covered in tongue and groove panelling on the north side, the west side comprises a re-used four-panel door nailed to the frame. Inside this small space a corner wash basin remains and Mr Betts reports that the blocked doorway in the west wall formerly led into the toilets. This whole arrangement is clearly not part of the original building and may relate to its wartime or later uses.

To the immediate east of this washroom is a chimney breast which projects into the room. The fireplace opening has subsequently been infilled and the fire-opening dimensions can be determined

Broad Street, Earls Barton

by the butt joints of the jambs and the shallow segmental arch. Immediately to the east of the chimney breast is the outline of a narrow blocked doorway visible only from its jambs; the lintel has been removed.

The remainder of the ground floor space is devoid of any fixtures or fittings apart from post-War electrical sockets and a single iron gas pipe with brass tap which may relate to an earlier phase of lighting.

First floor, interior

The first floor is reached via the staircase, previously described. The west side of the stair was originally boarded, most likely by vertical tongue and groove planking, scars of which can faintly be seen on the side of the string. It appears that the upper floor was originally a single open space since no indications can be seen of any dividing partitions although at an unknown date a small office was created at the top of the stairs in the southern arm by the addition of a stud wall (Fig 10).



Fig 10: First floor, looking south (scar of timber partition wall to right of 1m scale)

Scars of this timber partition wall along with pencil setting-out lines can be seen on the east and west walls and small square holes cut in the floor boards indicate the position of a central doorway. A small window appears to have been created in the west wall, perhaps at the same time; it has subsequently been infilled with Fletton brick.

The remainder of the first floor is a single open space lit by the two windows in the east wall and five in the north; they are all identical to that previously described both in the framing and glazing. The floor is of 6 ½ inch pine boards and the walls are painted white. The chimneybreast on the south wall retains a simple cast iron bedroom (i.e. small) fireplace surround with integral mantle shelf and cream and green glazed slip-tiles down either side (Fig 11). The hearth slab is of cast concrete.



Fig 11: First floor fireplace, looking south; scale 50cm

The roof structure is of very simple construction with only one principal truss (Fig 10). This is aligned north-south from the re-entrant angle of the L-shape to the central pier, between the line of windows on the north side, and is a simple A-frame with a vertical iron bar bolted between the apex and collar. The remainder of the roof comprises common rafters set directly on top of the purlins which run from the gable walls to the principal truss, or in the case of the north-east corner, the hip. There is a thin ridge plank. Collars, simply nailed to the rafters, formed the frame for a ceiling onto which laths had been fixed before being plastered.

Apart from modern, post-War, electrical sockets of brown Bakelite there are no fixtures or fittings. A crudely constructed low frame set over two small holes cut through the floorboards is a secondary addition, perhaps for a drive belt mechanism associated with the lathe situated below, but no evidence survives of any fittings that might relate to the original building's usage.

Broad Street, Earls Barton

Conclusion

The small workshop, too small to be reasonably described as a factory, retains its original form with some of its original fenestration and a single doorway surviving unaltered. Some doorways and windows have been subsequently infilled, but in the case of the windows there seems little doubt that they were identical to those currently surviving. The doorways were probably made in a similar fashion to the single surviving example. All are representative of 'industrial' rather than domestic fittings of the late nineteenth-or early twentieth-century buildings and were utilised for their sturdy construction and functionality rather than their aesthetic appeal.

Of the internal arrangements of the working processes undertaken in the building little can be said since no original features, apart from the fireplace and staircase, survives. The washroom is a later addition and probably dates to the Second World War period. The small 'office' at the top of the stairs is also a secondary addition.

Bibliography

Palmer, J E, 2006 *Earls Barton: The history of a Northamptonshire parish*



IS Heritage, 20 May 2015