



THE UNIVERSITY
OF BIRMINGHAM

**A Record of the South
Stand, City Stadium,
Filbert Street, Leicester**

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit



Institute of Field
Archaeologists

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
Project No. 1078
June 2003

**A Record of the South Stand, City Stadium,
Filbert Street, Leicester**

by
Malcolm Hislop

For further information please contact:
Alex Jones (Director)
Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
The University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
Tel: 0121 414 5513
Fax: 0121 414 5516
E-Mail: BUFAU@bham.ac.uk
Web Address: <http://www.bufau.bham.ac.uk>

Contents

- Summary
- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Location and Character of the Area
- 3.0 Objectives
- 4.0 Methods
- 5.0 Historical Summary of the City Stadium
- 6.0 Description of the South Stand
- 7.0 Discussion
- 8.0 Acknowledgements
- 9.0 References
- Appendix: Index of Photo Archive

Figures

1. Location map
2. The ground in 1966
3. Section through the South Stand

Plates

1. South front from the southeast
2. Detail of the south front
3. North front
4. Detail of the building from the northwest
5. Lower terrace gallery
6. Lower terrace from the west
7. Upper terrace from the west
8. Upper terrace gallery
9. Roof structure

A Record of the South Stand, City Stadium, Filbert Street, Leicester

Summary

In May 2003 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit was commissioned by DearsBrack to prepare an archive report on the south stand of the City Stadium, the former ground of Leicester City Football Club, situated on Filbert Street just to the south of the city centre (NGR SK 58130278). The work was based on a series of digital images of the City Stadium taken by the developers prior to the demolition of the stadium buildings. The south stand was built in 1927 to the design of Sir E.O. Williams and D.J. Moss, and was a substantial double decker grandstand of brick, concrete and steel construction, that drew on the pioneering work of the engineer Archibald Leitch, and which embodied the more architectural approach to stadium design that was current in the 1920s and 1930s.

1.0 Introduction

In February 2003 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) undertook an archaeological desk-based assessment on behalf of DearsBrack (Hancox and Hislop 2003), ahead of the proposed redevelopment of the City Stadium, Filbert Street, Leicester, the former ground of Leicester City Football Club. Although there is, as yet, no national conservation policy on football buildings, the importance of England's sporting heritage has been recognised through a recent Manchester-based pilot study, sponsored by English Heritage (Cooper 2002, Inglis 2002, Chitty and Wood 2002), and the recommendation of the assessment was that building recording of the South Stand be carried out prior to demolition.

In response to these recommendations the developers made a digital format photographic record of the South Stand and other aspects of the stadium. On the basis of the desk-based assessment and the digital images, the Leicester City Archaeologist recommended that a photographic survey of the south stand be carried out or completed by a suitably qualified organisation in accordance with RCHME guidelines (RCHME 1996). However, by that time demolition of the South Stand had commenced, rendering the recommendation impractical. A second recommendation was made to take account of the changed situation, whereby the existing digital photographs were to be supplemented by a paper archive of images, a set of 'thumbnail images' to act as a visual index, annotated drawings to support the photographic record, and a documentary summary. In addition, a set of transparencies was to be produced from the digital images.

2.0 Location and Character of the Area

The site of the City Stadium is located just to the south of Leicester city centre, outside the Roman and medieval towns (NGR SK 58130278, Figs. 1 and 2). The football ground lay within a working class area of terraced housing and factories, built up around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The north side of the ground was bounded by Filbert Street, and the east side by Burnmoor Street, formerly Grasmere Street. To the west was a car park, and to the south factories.

3.0 Objectives

- To index and archive the existing photographs
- To provide a record of the South Stand

4.0 Methods

The digital images were identified from memory, provided with picture and written indexes (the latter reproduced as an appendix to this report), and a paper archive produced. A set of transparencies was produced from the digital images. Colour prints taken during the desk-based assessment were added to the archive. The historical summary is based on the desk-based assessment (Hancox and Hislop 2003), and the building description on the photographic record, and from notes made during a short inspection in respect of the desk-based assessment.

5.0 Historical Summary of the City Stadium

The area in which the City Stadium was situated was developed during the latter half of the 19th century. By 1871 the eastern half of Filbert Street had been built up, though the area later occupied by the football ground was depicted as open fields in 1886 when the first large-scale Ordnance Survey map appeared. The ground was laid out and the first game played in 1891. In 1900 the pitch was extended by 50ft to the south. The wooden terracing that had been behind the south goal was moved to the north end, and replaced with terracing built on an earthen bank. It was nicknamed 'Spion Kop' after the Boer War battle fought on the eponymous ridge. The stadium is first depicted in the cartographic record on the 2nd edition of the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1904, which shows that there was a covered stand on the west side only (Hancox and Hislop 2003).

The Leicester City Football Club Company Ltd was formed in 1919, and shortly afterwards, in March 1921, work started on the construction of a new main stand on the west side of the ground, to the designs of the architect W.E. Moore. It was erected behind the then existing stand, which was afterwards demolished and the pitch moved 30 feet towards the west. In 1927 the roof from the Spion Kop, or the South Stand, was removed and re-erected at the north end, the stand itself being replaced by a new double-decker stand, which was erected to what is said to have been an almost identical design that of the West Stand at West Ham's Boleyn Ground, Upton Park, the creation of Sir E.O. Williams and D.J. Moss (Inglis 1987, 258). Contrary to the suggestion that the same designer and contractor were employed at both sites (Foulger 2002, 40), the Filbert Street South Stand was the work of Leicester architect, Norman Read, and the engineer, W. J. Cearns of Stratford, whose drawings are preserved at the Leicestershire Record Office (Building Plan 32798) One of these drawings, a section through the building is reproduced here as Fig.3.

More recent developments were the construction of executive boxes over the north terrace in 1974, and in 1993-4 the building of a new West (Carling) Stand to replace the construction of 1921 (Hancox and Hislop 2003).

6.0 Description of the South Stand

The South Stand, was a double-decker construction with a brick-built south wall, steel framed sides and concrete floors, the grandstand being carried on a steel frame. The side panels and pitched roof were latterly of corrugated iron sheeting.

The style of the outer (south) elevation was rooted in classicism but had modernist leanings (Plate 1). It had four tiers of panels reflecting the internal floor levels, namely ground level, gallery behind the lower terrace, gallery beneath the upper terrace, and the uppermost tier of the upper terrace. The front was divided into twelve bays (here numbered 1 to 12 from west to east) by pilasters with corrugated edges and fluted quasi-capitals (Plate 2). There were turnstiles in bays 4, 6, 7 and 9, and tall small-pane windows in all the bays of the second tier, those of bays 2, 6, 7, and 11 being truncated owing to the lavatories for the lower terrace being situated in these positions inside. The third tier was covered latterly with corrugated iron, and the upper tier was blind.

The north front, towards the pitch (Plate 3), displayed a low ground-storey terrace and a much higher upper terrace with seating, and a Leitch-style fretwork balcony. The cramped appearance of the lower terrace was created by the low front and high roof line of the more steeply pitched upper terrace. The roof, which was originally crested by a line of louvered vents, oversailed the front tiers of the lower storey, which were not directly under the upper terrace (Plate 4). Steel columns divided the lower terrace into six bays and the upper terrace into three bays.

Inside, the lower terrace was divided into four 'pens', and rose up to a gallery at the rear (south) (Plate 5). Here were four refreshment bars (bays 1, 4, 9 and 12), and four lavatories, each containing a urinal and a W. C. (bays 2, 6, 7 and 11). Staircases led up to the gallery from each of the four turnstiles. The bay divisions of the lower terrace formed part of a steel frame that supported the upper terrace (Plate 6). The columns of the transverse frames supported longitudinal beams at the front and centre, which carried a series of inclined transverse members that lay immediately below the upper terrace. Behind (south of) the central longitudinal beam was a series of horizontal beams, one end being supported by the south wall.

The steeply pitched upper terrace (Plate 7) was divided into six blocks, each of which was provided with some steps which descended to a gallery beneath the rear seats (Plate 8). At the west end of the gallery there was a staircase leading to a separate turnstile. The upper roof was carried on a steel frame of considerable complexity, held in tension. (Fig. 3, Plate 9). The three main columns at the front of the stand supported a purlin. From here the roof pitched forward over the front of the lower terrace, and back to the ridge, and from the ridge to the rear wall, being supported on transverse trusses with vertical and oblique bracing.

7.0 Discussion

In concept, the City Stadium's South Stand is a direct descendant of the works of the inter-wars engineer, Archibald Leitch, the most important figure in the design of football stands during the first half of the 20th century. In 1909, drawing on his

experience of designing two-tier stands, in which the seating was provided at a higher level behind the terrace, Leitch designed the first double-decker stand, whereby the seated accommodation was over rather than behind the terrace. After the First World War, the double decker became standard, all Leitch's post-war main stands, for example, were double deckers (Inglis 1987, 17-19).

The South Stand at Filbert Street, then, was typical of its time in this respect, but is also representative of a more architectural approach to football stadium design, that characterised the 1920s and 1930s. One of the earliest examples of this genre is Wembley Stadium of 1922-23 by C. J. Simpson and Maxwell Ayrton, closely followed by West Ham's West Stand which served as the model for Filbert Street. Arguably the highpoint of this series came nine years later, in 1936, with the East Stand at Arsenal's Highbury ground with its striking entrance front designed by Claude Waterlow Ferrier and Major W.B. Binnie (Inglis 1987, 19).

Though not up to the standard of Wembley or Highbury the Filbert Street South Stand was nevertheless an architecturally significant example of football architecture of the 1920s. Its social context is the rise of mass entertainment and the cult of the open air that were distinguishing aspects of life in the 1920s and 1930s (Forsyth 1982). The South Stand was typical of the 'architecture of leisure' that developed to accommodate these activities.

8.0 Acknowledgements

This work was carried out by Malcolm Hislop and the report was edited by Steve Litherland. The figures and plates were prepared by Nigel Dodds and Bryony Ryder. Richard Clarke, Leicester City Archaeologist, who monitored the project for Leicester City Council, provided some useful advice about possible sources of information. Thanks are also owed to the staff of Leicestershire County Record Office.

8.0 References

Chitty, G. and Wood, J. 'A Sporting Chance: Realising the Value of Sports Heritage', *Conservation Bulletin* 43.

Cooper, M. 2002. *A Sporting Chance: Extra Time for England's Historic Sports Venues* (English Heritage).

Forsyth, A. 1982. *Buildings for the Age*. HMSO.

Foulger, N. 2002. *Farewell to Filbert Street 1891-2000*.

Hancox, E. and Hislop, M. 2003. *City Stadium, Filbert Street, Leicester: An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* (BUFAU Report No. 1042).

Inglis, S. 1987. *The Football Grounds of Great Britain*, 2nd edn.

Inglis S. 2002. 'A Sporting Chance: Manchester's Sporting Heritage', *Conservation Bulletin* 43.

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

Appendix: Index of Photo Archive

Digital

1. South Stand entrance from the south
2. South Stand from the southeast (Plate 4)
3. South Stand from the south
4. South Stand from the east
5. South Stand from the southeast
6. South Stand from the south
7. South Stand from the west
8. South Stand from the southwest
9. South Stand from the northwest
10. South Stand from the west
11. South Stand from the northwest
12. South Stand from the northwest (Plate 2)
13. South Stand from the northwest
14. South Stand from the northeast
15. South Stand from the north
16. East Stand from the west
17. East Stand from the west
18. East and south stands from the northwest
19. South Stand from the west (Plate 9)
20. South Stand lower terrace from the west
21. South Stand lower terrace from the southwest
22. South Stand lower terrace from the south
23. South Stand lower terrace from the southwest
24. South Stand lower terrace from the west
25. South Stand from the west
26. South Stand from the west
27. South Stand from the west
28. South Stand from the east (Plate 6)
29. West Stand from the south
30. South Stand from the west
31. South Stand upper terrace from the east (Plate 8)
32. South Stand upper terrace from the west (Plate 7)
33. The pitch from the southwest
34. South Stand upper terrace from the east
35. East Stand roof from the south
36. West Stand from the southeast
37. South Stand upper terrace from the south
38. South Stand upper terrace from the north
39. South Stand upper terrace from the north
40. South Stand upper terrace from the northwest
41. South Stand staircase
42. South Stand staircase
43. South Stand staircase
44. South Stand steps from the south
45. South Stand east entrance from the east
46. East Stand entrance from the southeast

47. North Stand entrance from the northeast
48. South Stand from the north
49. South Stand from the north

Colour Negatives

1. East entrance from the east
2. South Stand from the southeast
3. South Stand from the southeast (Plate 3)
4. South Stand from the southeast
5. North Stand from the northwest
6. South Stand from the southwest
7. The ground from the south
8. South Stand lower terrace from the east
9. South Stand lower terrace from the west (Plate 5)
10. South Stand lower terrace gallery from the east
11. South Stand lower terrace from the southwest
12. East Stand from the southwest
13. South Stand from the north (Plate 1)
14. South Stand lower terrace from the southeast
15. South Stand lower terrace from the north
16. South Stand lower terrace from the west
17. South Stand from the northwest
18. South Stand from the northwest
19. East Stand from the west
20. North Stand from the southwest



Fig. 1

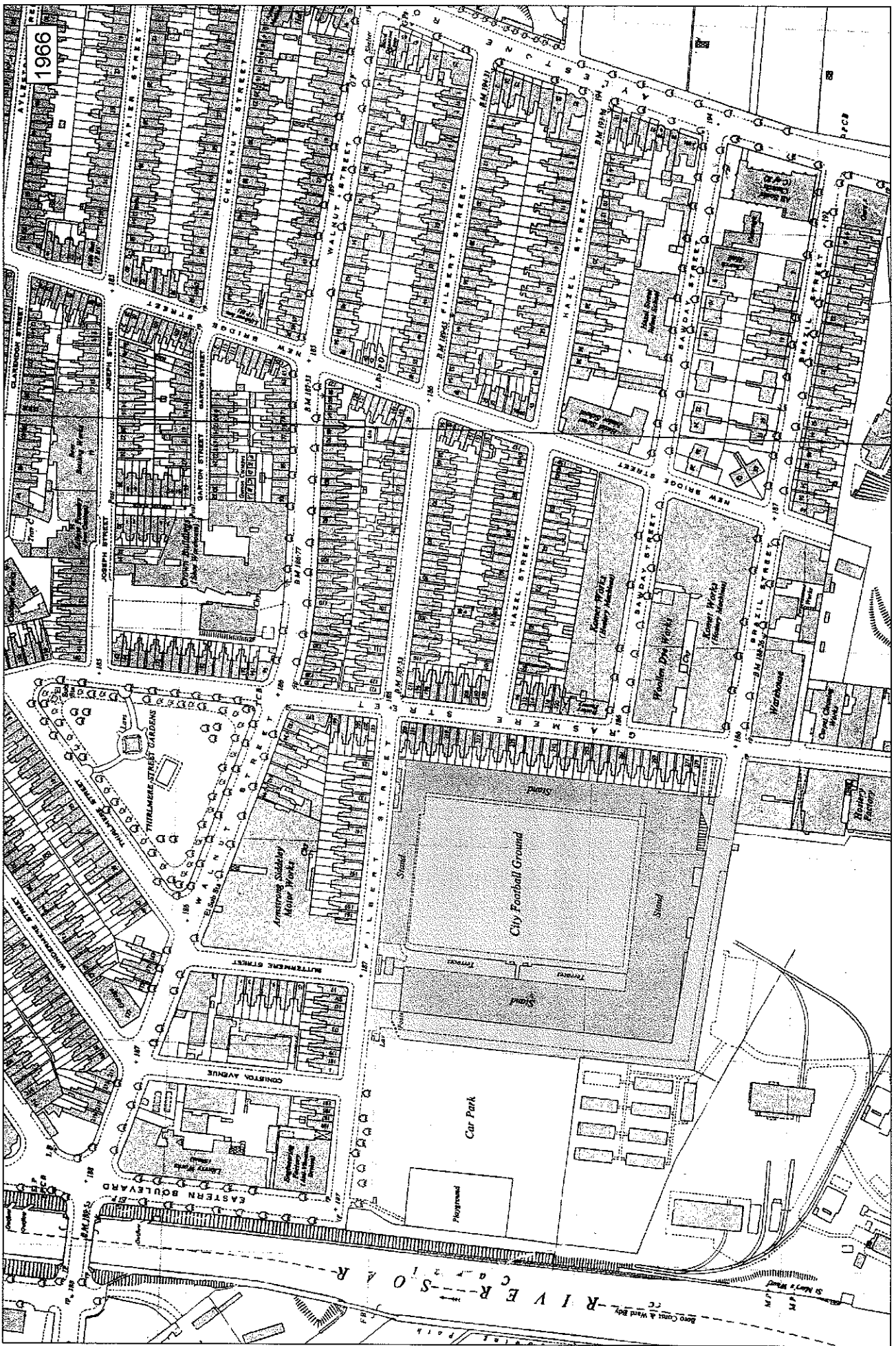


Fig.2

PROPOSED NEW STAND TO SOUTH BANK
FOR LEICESTER CITY FOOTBALL CLUB LTD

Scale 1/4" = 1' max

37128
Leicester City
Football Club

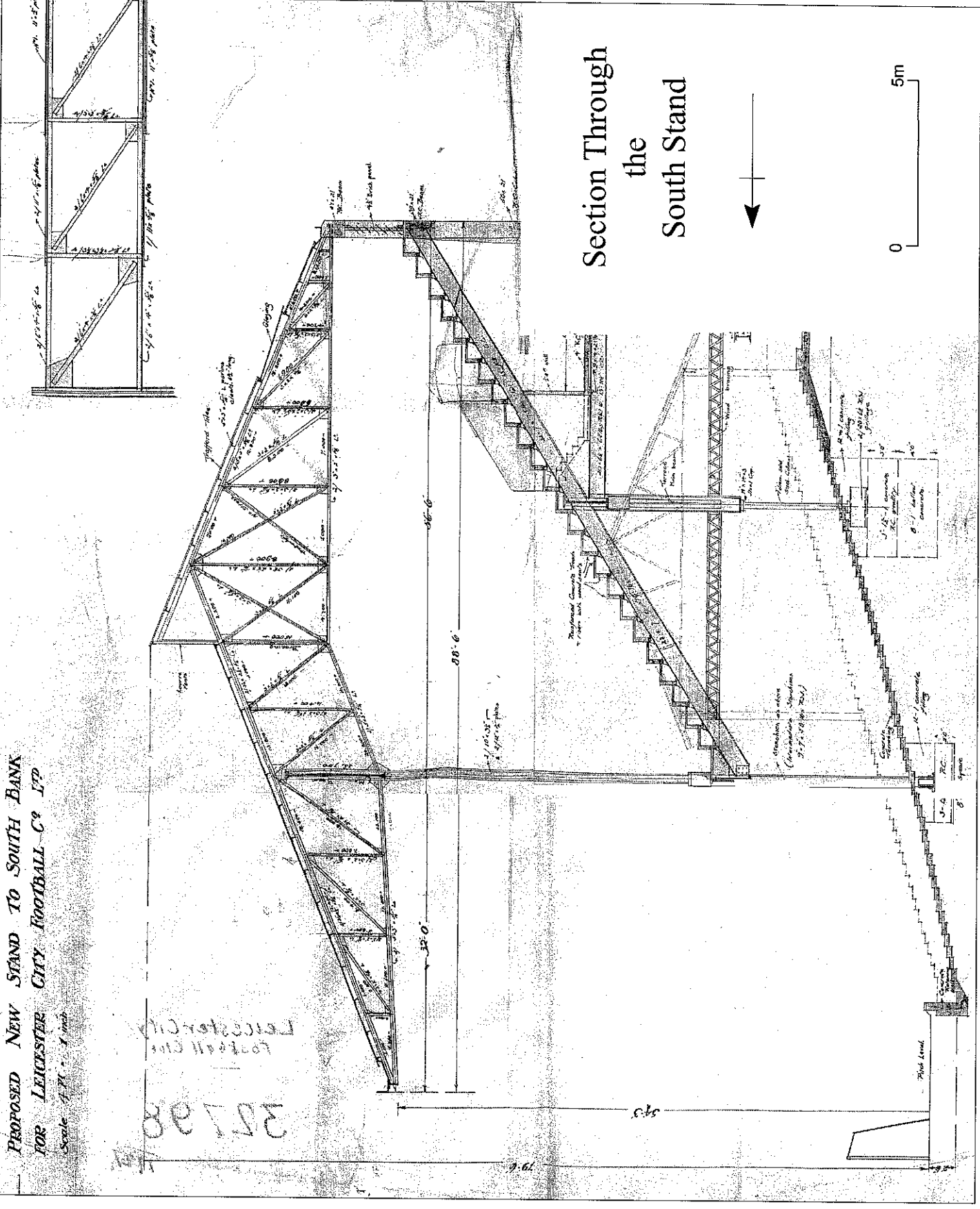


Fig.3



Plate 1



Plate 2

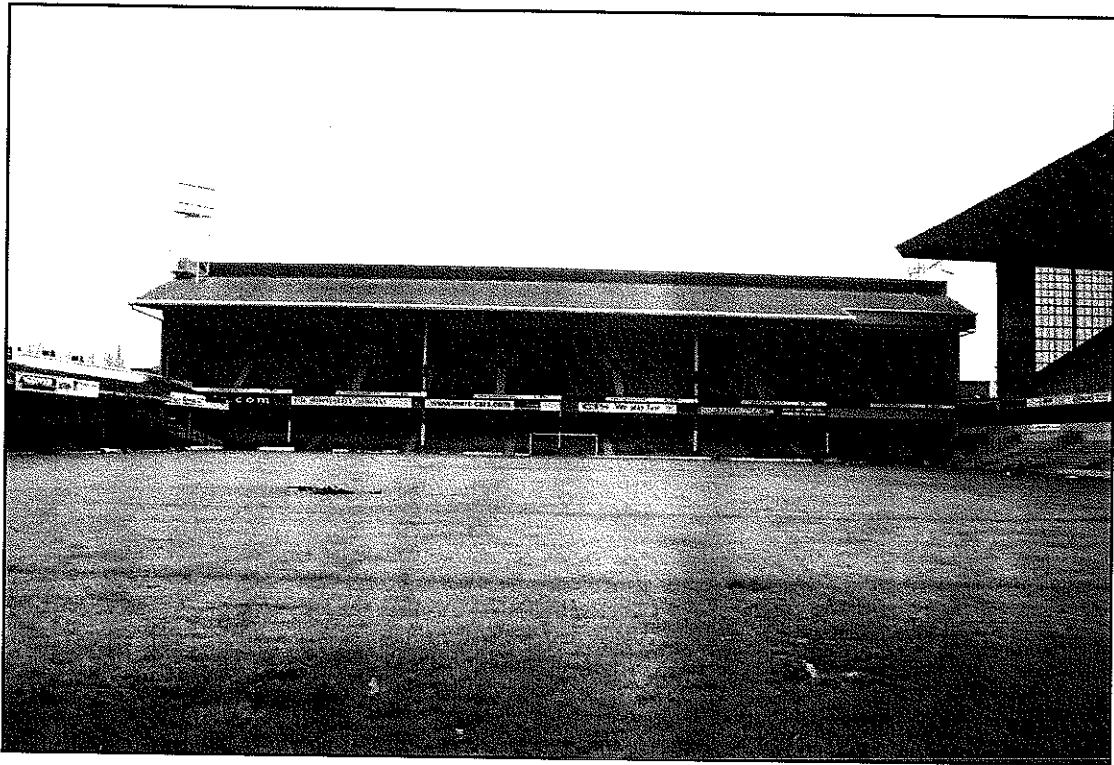


Plate 3

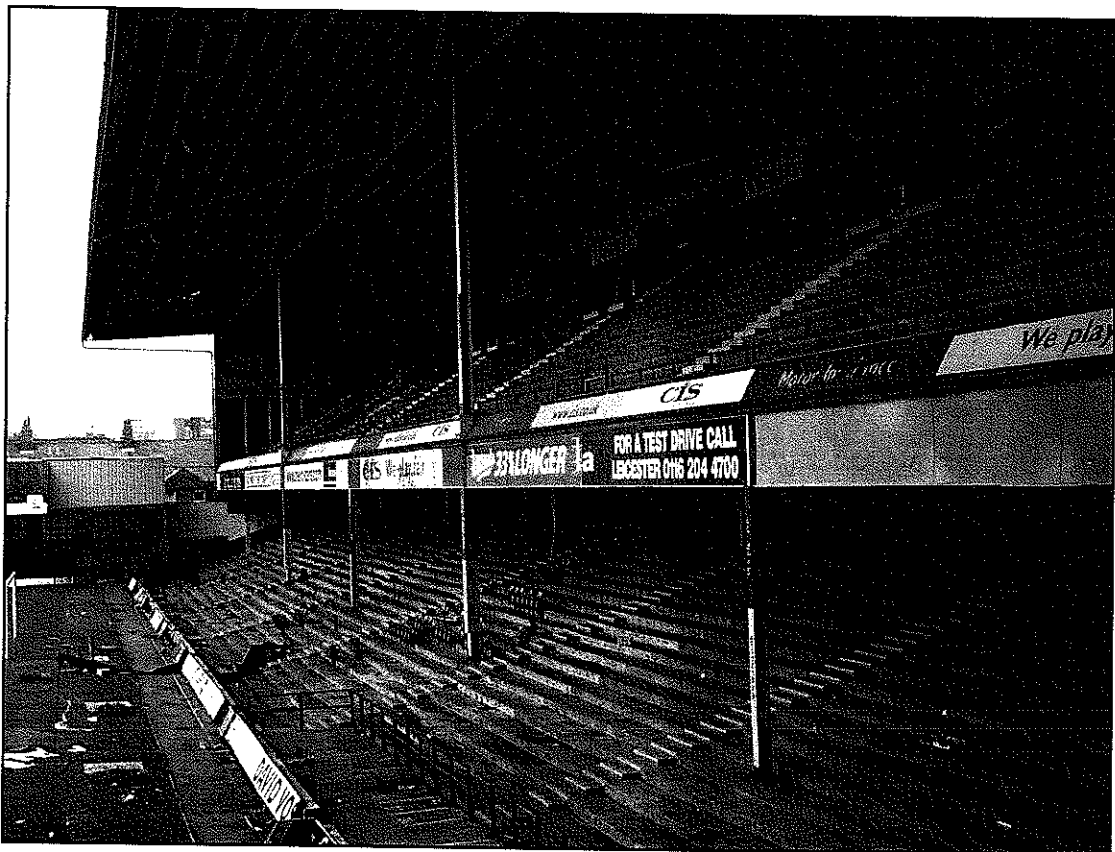


Plate 4

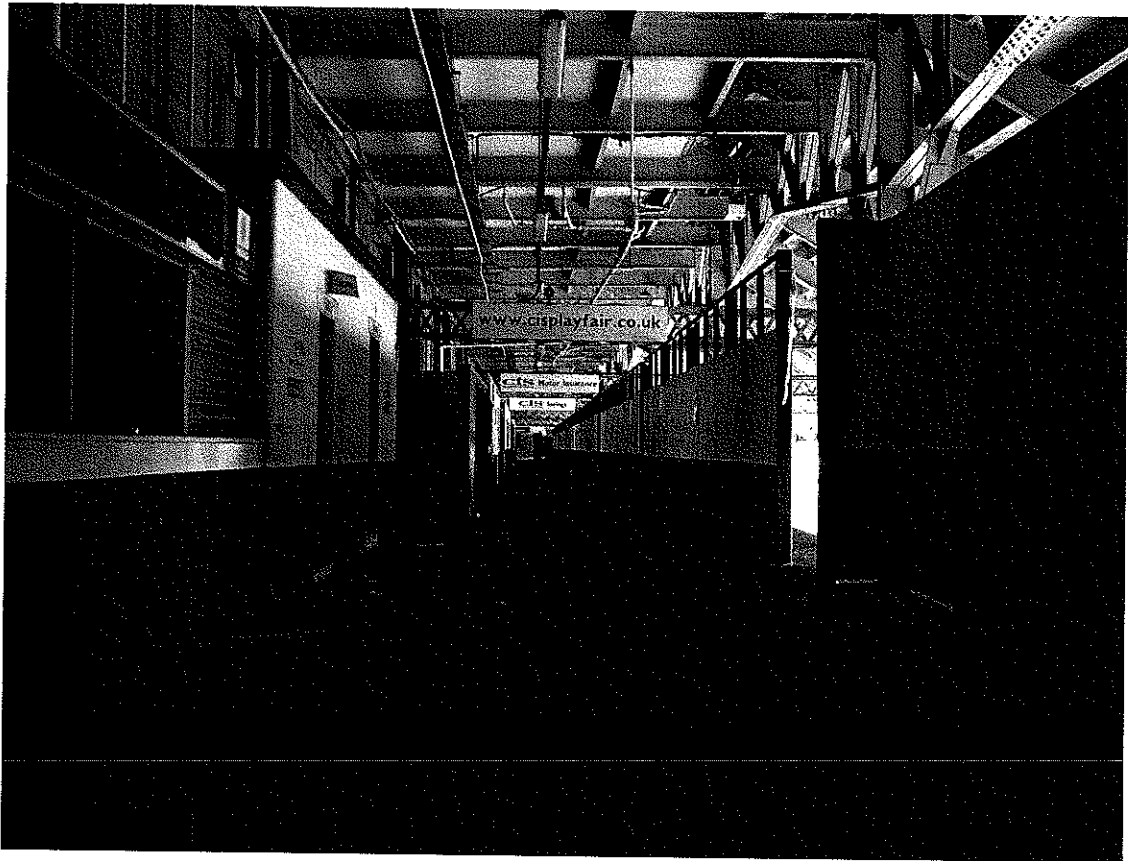


Plate 5



Plate 6

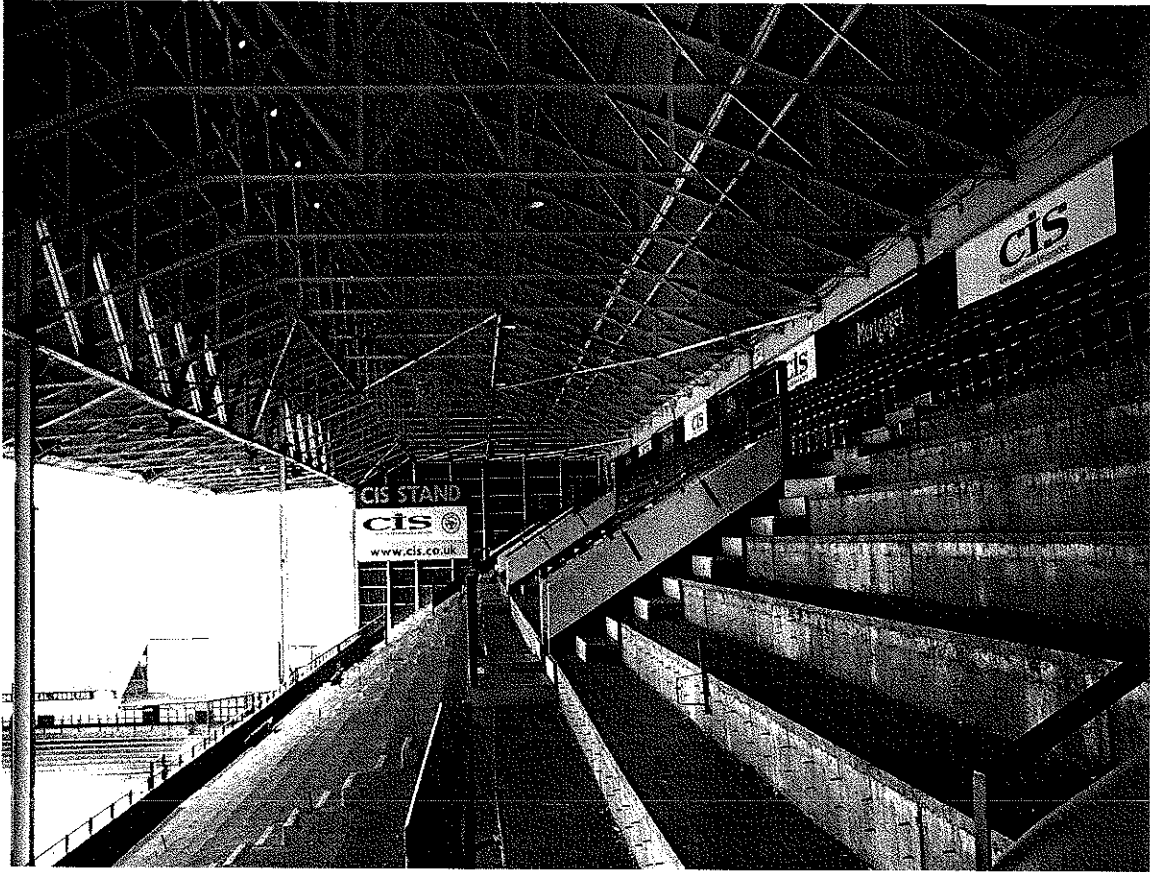


Plate 7

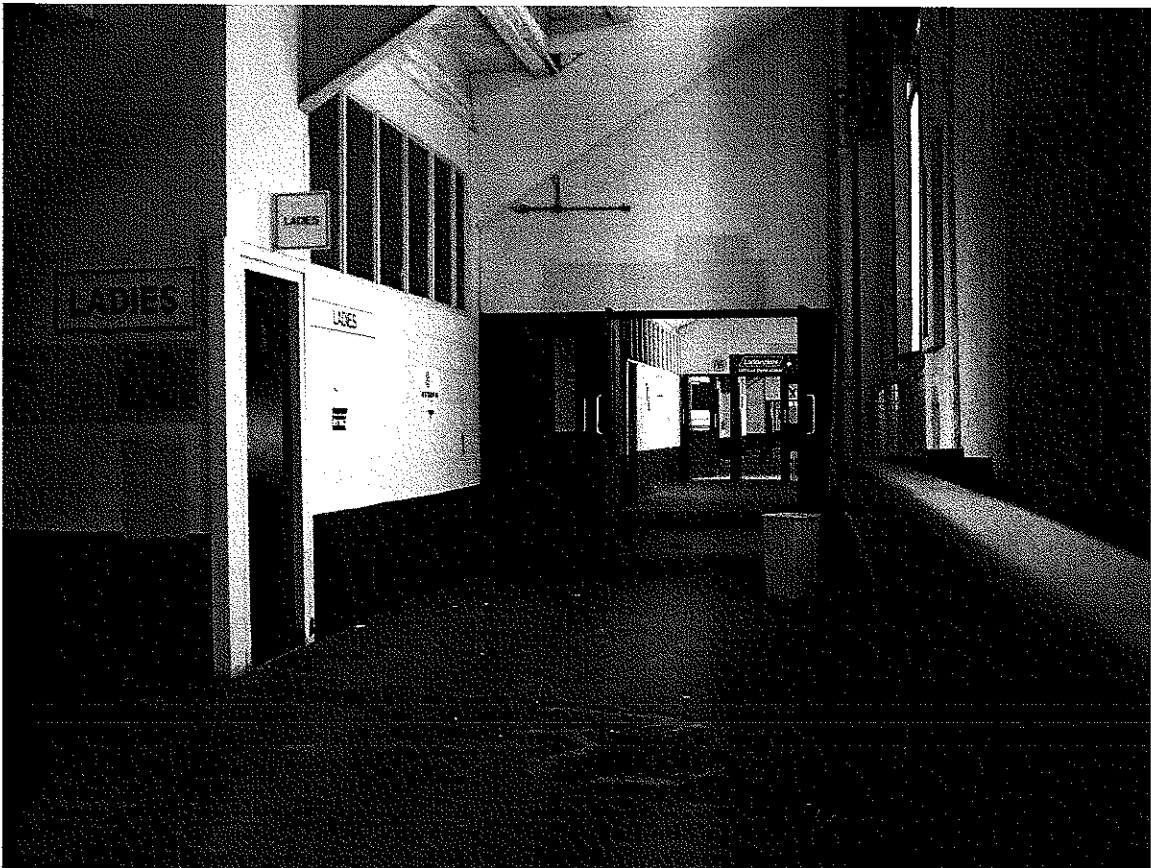


Plate 8

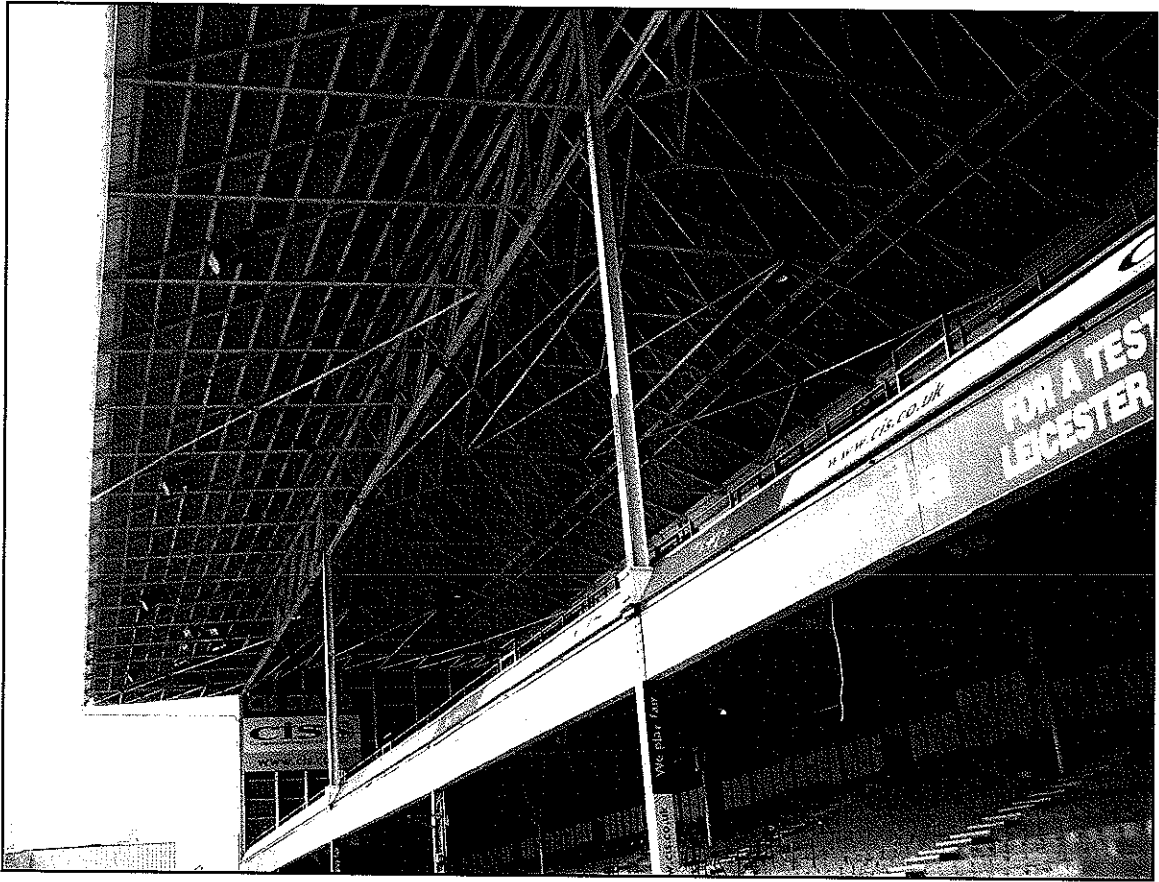


Plate 9