

Figure 2.7: Extract from “Details of Cone Foundations at Nailsea Glassworks”
(The titling on Figure 2.7 has been edited and typed for clarity.)



Figure 2.8: The Nailsea Glassworks Cone Supports, revealed during demolition in 1905 (NDLHS)

There appears to be no report giving the reasoning behind the suggested phasing, other than a statement on the “relieving arches” plan that the secondary airway appeared to cut the cone wall. The typescript by G Lewis, in NS SMR File B, comments, “The similar stonework used in the construction of the cone wall and the adjoining swinging pit area enclosed between the cone wall and the outer wall 2, suggests that these structures are contemporary with one another. Historical records tell us that this could not be so as there was no actual cylinder (sheet) glass production at Nailsea until 1844 (Chance 1968:35).” [The recorded introduction by Chance Brothers to the United Kingdom of “the improved cylinder method also known as German sheet glass” is not until 1832⁸.]

The patent documentation (SRO DD/SAS/ C/2136) casts doubt on this statement. It is evidence that J R Lucas was familiar enough with the method known as German sheet glass to include reference to it in his patent of 1805. Both the Old House and New House Cones have “flattening” and “annealing” kilns associated with them on the 1830s plan. It is suggested therefore, both on this and on map evidence, that the 2-stage blowing hole, as well as the northern eight-stage blowing hole (referred to as a 10-stage blowing hole in Phase 3 of Figure 2.10, but shown as 8-stage on the 1870 plan) was in fact part of the original design, as the “footprint” of the ca. 1826 plan clearly has space for them. Furthermore, the latter plan also shows the “six-storey” warehouse - {6} on the 1870 plan, as mentioned above. This and the northern blowing holes are not shown on these excavation plans and diagrams, not having been proved by excavation at this stage.

The argument is reinforced by the identification of the building of unknown function [12] to the north of the eastern end of the main air-way, which is shown as original, being identified as a “cylinder room”, {9} on the 1870 plan, which also shows another diametrically opposite. It is thought that these might have a re-heating or annealing function. The space in the centre of the 10-stage blowing holes would be occupied by a furnace for re-heating the cylinders during the

⁸ Burgoyne, I and Scoble, R, *Two Thousand Years of Flat Glass Making*, Chalons Press Ltd, St Helens, 1989

blowing and swinging process, similar to that to the north of the 2-stage blowing hole. (Burgoyne and Scoble, 1989, illustration of Improved Cylinder Method, p.5.)⁹

It would appear from the map/plan evidence seen that the southern 10-stage blowing hole was added or extended sometime between 1840 (tithe) and 1870 (Sturge plan). This is based on the introduction of a discontinuity in the range of buildings to the south of the New House Cone.

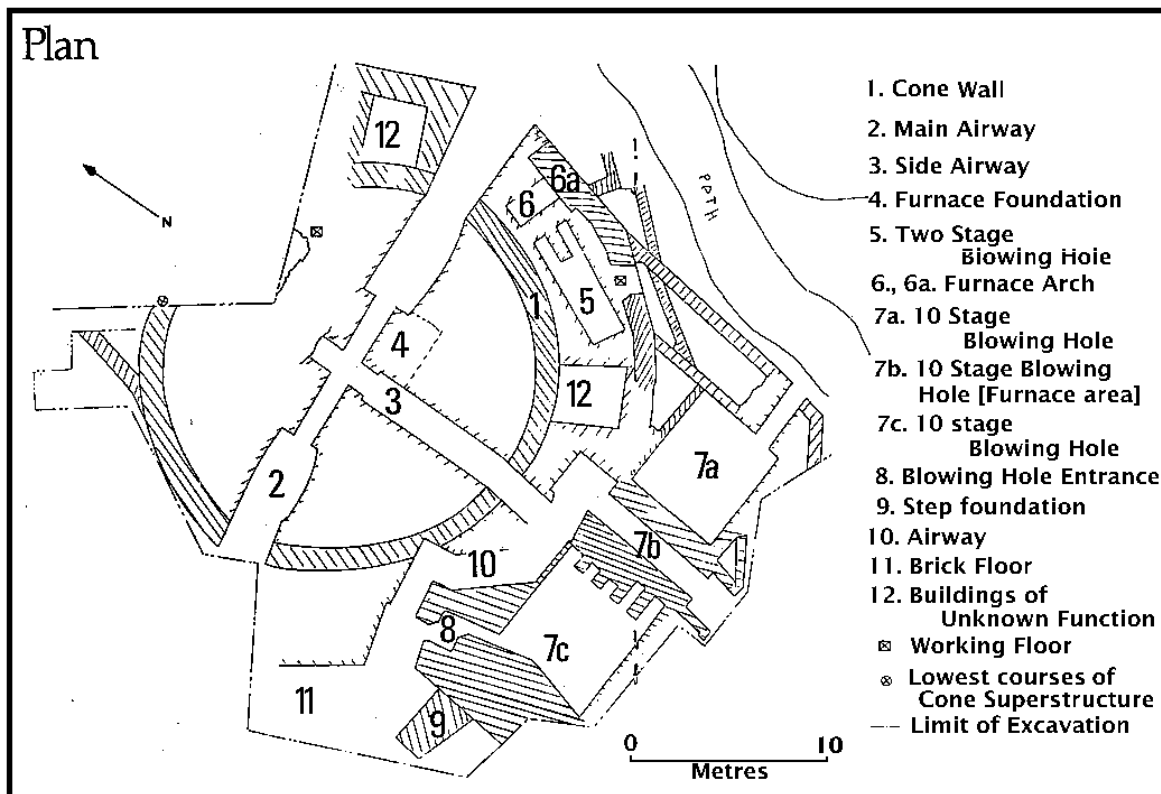


Figure 2.9: 1987 Key Plan (probably by B Bentham) [Legend re-typed]

The Evening Post for Saturday, March 5, 1988 (Cutting NS SMR, Folder E) records that, “Now the five-year programme is over, and supervising archaeologist Mr Brian Bentham will be attempting to solve at least two mysteries as he begins a long and detailed study of the findings. He has yet to discover the reason why a well-preserved system of clay-lined water drainage channels was needed for the glass blowing and he still has to identify one of the buildings on the site. “But we have learnt a lot about how the glass was made and we believe the site may well be unique in Europe for one production process,” he said.” However, the Weston Mercury, Friday, September 23, 1988 mentions, “The work, which has just finished...” What that process might be has not been determined in this study.

There are two very detailed drawings of the cone as excavated, by Brian Bentham dated 7-7-89, at a scale of 1:50, one of which is annotated with context numbers. (NS SMR 2397). These represent the final stage of this intervention, and the un-labelled one is reproduced here as Figure 2.11, below.

⁹ *Ibid.*