



**A Historic Building Survey at the
Britannia Works,
Coleshill Road,
Atherstone,
Warwickshire**

NGR: SP 30646 97419

Andrew Hyam



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Summary

A Level 3 historic building survey was undertaken by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) between the 15th and 18th of October 2018. The survey studied the former Britannia Works on Coleshill Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire. The Grade-II listed works are the last hat-making factory in Atherstone and have been closed since 1999. The site has been used as a hat works since the early 19th century and developed as the Britannia Works and Richmond Mill until they combined in the first half of the 20th century. There are a number of buildings on site ranging from the earliest structures from both factories up to the 1930s when a large modern steel-framed building replaced many of the earlier and smaller buildings. Following the decline of the hatting industry the associated factories in and around Atherstone closed down leaving the Britannia Works to continue until 1999. Plans have been submitted to redevelop the site for housing which will entail the demolition of some of the structures.

Introduction

In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 16 *Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment* this document is a report on the results of Level 3 historic building record of The Britannia Works, Coleshill Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire, NGR SP 30646 97419. Level 3 historic building surveys are defined in the Historic England guidance document – *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2016). The report was commissioned by Hazleton Homes in advance of a residential redevelopment of the former Wilson and Stafford hat factory. Under planning application number PAP/2015/0167 and listed building consent PAP/2015/0168 permission has been granted to demolish parts of the former works and refurbish others to create a new residential development.

Due to the historic nature of the Grade-II listed former hat works and its significance to the industrial history of Atherstone a condition was inserted in the planning and listed building consent that an appropriate and approved level of recording should take place prior to any development taking place. In addition to the historic building recording a programme of archaeological trial trenching is to take place. The results of the trial trenching will be recorded in a separate ULAS report. A ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Historic Building Survey at The Britannia Works, Coleshill Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire* (the WSI) was produced for this site which specified the aims and objectives and methodology for this phase of the work. This report initially began as a survey of the components which were to be demolished as part of the redevelopment programme but has since been enlarged to cover all of the buildings on site.

Atherstone is situated in North Warwickshire midway between Tamworth, approximately 9km to the north-west, and Nuneaton which lies to the south-east (Fig. 1). The Britannia Works lie approximately 0.5km to the south-west of Atherstone town centre and sit alongside the Coventry Canal. The site forms a roughly triangular-shaped plot of land bounded by Coleshill Road which runs along the main north-west facing frontage of the works with the canal forming its north-east-facing boundary (Fig. 2). A row of terraced houses on Richmond Road form the south-west-facing boundary.

At the time of the survey the factory had been closed down and left empty for around 19 years resulting in a rather run-down structure. Some roofs, ceilings and floors had collapsed so that some areas could not be entered safely. No fixtures and fittings remained in any of the buildings. A significant amount of vandalism has also taken place since the building has been empty which has resulted in an increase in the speed of decay. Immediately prior to the survey a number of trees and thick undergrowth had been removed from the central yard to enable clearer photographs to be obtained.

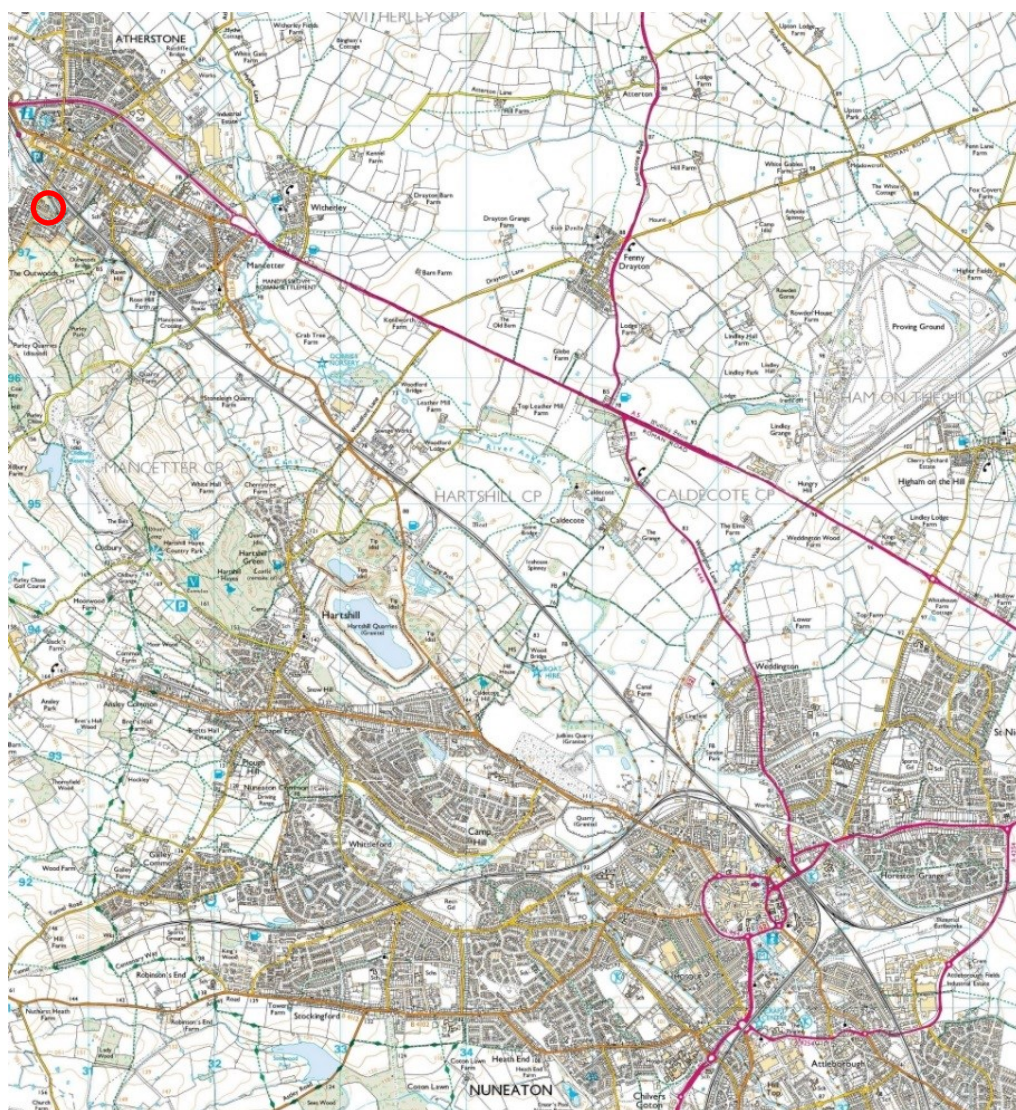


Figure 1 Atherstone location
Site location highlighted



Figure 2 Site highlighted
Plan supplied by client

Background

The town of Atherstone grew up alongside the transport highway of Watling Street which was later supplemented by the opening of the Coventry Canal in 1771. These transport links clearly had a major effect on the flow of goods which were of great benefit to the growing local industries. The opening of the LNWR railway in 1847 further benefitted and improved the town's trade links.

Atherstone's association with the hatting industry appears to date back at least to the early post-medieval period when hat manufacture was still very much a small cottage industry. Documentary evidence indicates that production began to become more organised and widespread in the early 17th century when the Bracebridge family became involved. The Bracebridge family were an influential family in Atherstone throughout the post-medieval period and had dealings in a number of properties and business concerns. Although they appear to have had a hand in the early organisation of the hatting industry, the Bracebridges did not manufacture hats but maintained warehouses for raw materials and finished hats.

Another factor contributing to the growth of the hatting industry was a good, and readily available, local source of soft water. This is necessary for the felting process and also shaping processes. Four suitable watercourses run through the town and records indicate that the early hat manufacturers were clustered around these vital sources.

The History of Atherstone Research Team (HART) has carried out a detailed study of property ownerships and of the activities carried out in Atherstone between 1645 and 1851. Their studies revealed that 50 out of 180 burgage plots showed evidence of hatting manufacture at some point during the study period. These all appear to have been individual workshops rather than being under the control of a single manufacturer but it does highlight the importance of the industry to the town. HART's research also indicates that later 18th-century insurance records highlight a significant fire risk to the town from the stoves used to dry hats. This appears to have been one of the main hazards associated with the cottage industry. Heavy metal poisoning was yet to be appreciated.

Towards the end of the 18th century the industry was gradually becoming more mechanised which forced it to move away from small-scale individual work to larger centralised premises. These new factories were able to produce hats from basic raw materials all the way through to the finished item via a number of specialised workshops. The increase in the size of factories also attracted more workers to the town from outside the area. As the number of factories rose the Bracebridge family declined in influence and were replaced by other hatting families. Among these was the Willday family who are first recorded in 1649. By the mid-1800s the Willdays also seem to have withdrawn from direct manufacturing and were renting their former premises to William Hall and Charles Phillips. In 1862 another hatting company, Hill and Company, are recorded as being located on Coleshill Street and Canal Side. Morriss suggests that this may be on the site of the current Britannia Works (Morriss 2003;p 13) . In 1872 William Wilson and Richard Stafford became partners in Wilson and Stafford Limited who were based at the Britannia Works which are the subject of this survey.

A number of different owner's names come and go from Atherstone but the overall level of employment and production seems to have stayed relatively stable despite fluctuating economic situations although there were occasional periods of exceptional difficulty. The abolition of the slave trade caused a significant downturn in the hatting trade in Atherstone. The traditional cheap felt hat that owners gave to the slaves was suddenly no longer required and had the consequence of putting many Atherstone workers out of work. International trade tariffs with The United States, France, Germany and Russia also affected trade throughout the 19th century. A violent strike occurred at Hall and Phillips in 1862 over wages and working conditions although such problems were not just restricted to this company. Wilson and Stafford suffered an even more violent strike in 1878 when 300 workers protested at the owner's intention of reducing wages by 20%. Later in the same year around 1000 workers protested along Coleshill Road when it was revealed that Wilson and Stafford had opened a premises in London in order to get around the poor employee relations in Atherstone. The most recent decline in the hatting industry seems to have been since the Second World War when hat wearing rapidly fell out of favour.

Wilson and Stafford and the Britannia Works

As noted Wilson and Stafford formed a partnership in Atherstone in 1872. William Wilson arrived from Birmingham where his father was a wholesale silk hat manufacturer. He had been an apprentice to his father but had also worked between 1857 and 1872 for the local Atherstone hatters of Vero and Everitt. Richard Stafford

learnt his trade as an apprentice at Hall and Phillips until he joined Wilson at the age of 26. They commenced production at the Britannia Works site and were to remain there, still trading as Wilson and Stafford, until closure. In the early 1980s Wilson and Stafford purchased the two other remaining hat making factories in Atherstone: Denham and Hargrave and Vero and Everitt. All production moved to the Britannia Works and Wilson and Stafford became the last hatters remaining in Atherstone. Eventually, in 1999, the company closed and the remaining equipment was sold to a Russian hatting company and the Britannia Works premises became unoccupied.

A good deal of the readily available background history of the Britannia Works has been written in *An Outline Architectural and Archaeological Assessment* produced in 2003 by Richard K Morriss. This was further supplemented in 2015 in *A Heritage Impact Assessment of Proposed Development* also by Morriss. The 2015 assessment was updated in 2016. His report notes that initially the Wilson and Stafford factory only occupied part of the site along Coleshill Road and that the south-eastern area of the present site was occupied by the Richmond Mill which was also a hat manufacturing site. The Richmond Mill derives its name from the adjacent Richmond Road (or the Road gets its name from the mill, it is unclear which). It seems likely that this area was the original Hill and Company factory which was then taken over by Crouch and Company.

The Britannia Works have been Grade-II listed since 1975. The listing inspection appears to have undergone only a minimal inspection from Coleshill Road when first assessed. The Historic England listing is as follows:

BRITANNIA WORKS, COLESHILL ROAD

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1184912

Date first listed: 02-Jul-1975

Millinery works and factory. Early, mid and late C19 ranges. Flemish bond brick. Plain-tile roofs. 3 storeys. Early C19 three-bay entrance range. Central brick segmental archway with plank doors. C20 shallow projection has door with moulded lintel to third bay. First bay has 16-pane sashes to ground and first floors. First floor has C20 cross windows to second and third bays. Ground and first floor windows have moulded rendered cornices. Lower second floor has C20 top-hung windows. Moulded rendered cornice and parapet. Early/mid C19 two-storey 3-bay range to left has segmental-arched cast iron windows with glazing bars set in blank round arches. Dentil cornice. Hipped roof. 2-storey range adjoining, with wide cart entrance and window with glazing bars above, and 2-storey, 2-bay range on far left with segmental-arched iron windows to first floor are not of special architectural interest. Mid and late C19 range to right of entrance block is of 2 builds. 3 storeys; 7 bays. Blocked door. Segmental-arched iron windows with glazing bars. Interior not inspected.

Cartographic evidence

The earliest available map of the site and locality is the hand-drawn Ordnance Survey map published in 1817. Although lacking in clear detail it does show that there were no

buildings present on the site at this date. The next available map is the First Edition one-inch Ordnance Survey map published in 1835 (Fig. 3). This again lacks detail but appears to show a mill against the canal edge and set back from Coleshill Road. It seems likely that this may be the forerunner of Richmond Mill. Nothing of the Britannia Works appears to be present at this date. The public house, known as the Maid of the Mill, is shown to the side of the Works. Presumably this was built to serve the factory workers and those in the canal wharf to the north.

The next available map is the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25 inch map published in 1889. This names both the Britannia Works with Richmond Mill to the south-east both of which are identified as hat manufacturers (Fig. 4). Many of the buildings which exist to the present day along Coleshill Road are identifiable although there is a gap in the building line between the canal-side range and the main buildings to the south-west. There appears to be a clear division between the Britannia Works and the Richmond Mill complex to the south-east. This may relate to what is now a covered vehicle entrance. The Richmond Mill buildings have a cut-off south-eastern corner which may well be the corner of the building which is still present today (identified as Blocks C, D and E in the building description below).

By the time of the Second Edition OS map in 1903 the open vehicle entrance appears to have been covered over. Both works are still identified as being separate establishments. Some of the open spaces between the Britannia Works and Richmond Mill have been infilled by this time too (Fig. 5). There is then a significant gap until the publication of the 1924 OS map which shows very little building changes but only bears the name of the Britannia Works. This would suggest that by this date the Richmond Mill has been taken over and incorporated into the Britannia Works. One other noticeable change is the increase in size of the north corner building along the canal (Building O/P). This now has a splayed rectangular shape. Whilst the footprint of the other buildings seem to have undergone very little change one would imagine that internally there would have been significant reorganisations to produce one factory from two and avoid duplication of processes.

The results of the conversion from two factories into one factory can possibly be seen in the 1946 edition of the OS map (Fig. 6). Whilst the buildings along Coleshill Road seem to remain the same as previous editions a large building has replaced the conglomeration of small structures along the canal-side. This large building is shown on aerial photographs taken in 1936 and shown on the Historic England Britain From Above website (<https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EPW050400>). This shows the site as it stands today but with a row of buildings and a tall chimney backing against the rear wall of the public house garden. Only the most south-easterly of the former Richmond Mill buildings seem to have survived the rebuilding phase. A large rectangular building has also been added to the south-western corner of the site opposite the new canal side range. The 1958 and 1971 editions show a very similar layout of buildings although they now show the site simply labelled as *works* or *millinery works* rather than Britannia Works. The 1991 edition published only eight years before closure show that most buildings are still present but that a row of small outbuildings along the south boundary of the site have disappeared.



Figure 3 Detail from the 1835 1 inch Ordnance Survey map

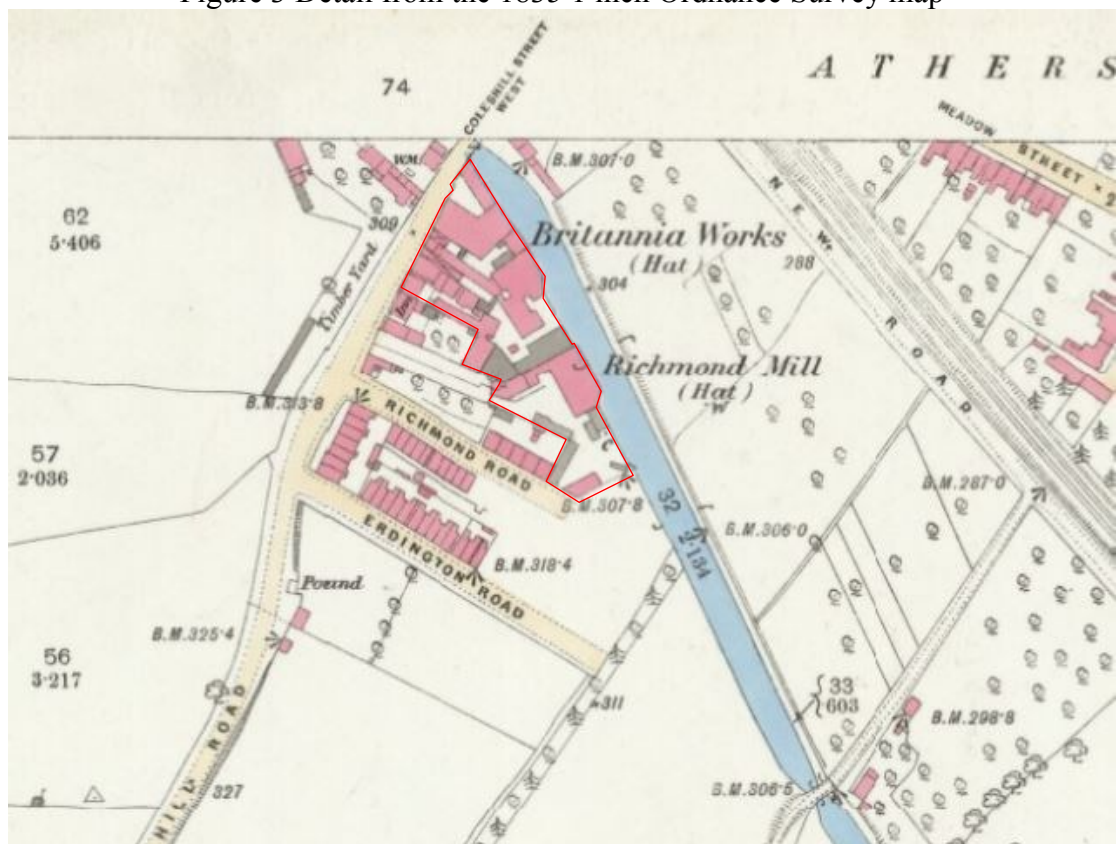


Figure 4 Detail from the 25 inch First Edition Ordnance Survey 1889 Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.15. Red outline shows current site boundary



Figure 5 Detail from the 1924 Ordnance Survey map
Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.15



Figure 6 Detail from the 1946 Ordnance Survey map
Leicestershire Sheet XXXIV.15

Objectives

The objectives for the survey were as set out in the ULAS *Written Scheme of Investigation for a Historic Building Survey at The Britannia Works, Coleshill, Atherstone, Warwickshire*. Within the stated project objectives, the principal aim of the survey was to provide a written, drawn and photographic record of the affected historic buildings prior to the commencement of any redevelopment work.

Methodology

The methodology and recording system employed for the Level 3 historic building survey was as stated in the ULAS WSI. In brief, survey followed Historic England's guidelines *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2016).

All work followed the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) *Code of Conduct* (2014).

Results

As already noted, Richard K Morriss has already carried out a number of appraisals of the Britannia Works. His studies allocated reference letters to each block and building from A to V. These identification letters have been continued by the current developers and will therefore continue to be used throughout this report (Fig. 7). The letters do not relate to any earlier uses or processes. Occasionally signs survived in-situ showing the purpose of the buildings and this has been reported in the discussion for each building. The site is roughly triangular in plan following both the line of the north-east to south-west Coleshill Road and the north to south Coventry Canal.

General site layout and overview

Each building will be discussed in detail later in this report but it is useful to give an overview of the site. The main elevation faces to the north-west across Coleshill Road (Figs 8 and 9). This elevation consists of four separate elements with three covered vehicle access passages. As noted by the listing information the elements are likely to date to the early/mid, mid and later 19th century with none of the elements appearing to have made much attempt to match the style of the preceding one. It would appear that, whilst some consideration to architectural style was made, the owners were more concerned with the function of each building. To the west of the elevation is the Maid of the Mill public House which, briefly inspected, appears to be of mid-19th century date with a much altered frontage. At the eastern end of the elevation the road rises quite rapidly to cross the Coventry Canal.

The buildings run alongside the western edge of the canal towpath and again have a number of distinct phases none of which match each other (Figs 10 and 11). At the canal bridge end are the Britannia Works buildings with the red brick and concrete-framed 1930s addition beyond that. This range is the one added following the rebuilding of the Richmond Mill and shown in the 1946 OS map. At the southern end of the canal-

side buildings are a set of red-brick structures which may be the last survivors of the former Richmond Mill buildings.

Very little of the Britannia Works can be seen from Richmond Road as a line of terraced houses form most of the site boundary. A heavily overgrown entrance half way down the road is likely to be the original Britannia Works entrance whilst the present entrance into the site was probably the Richmond Mill entrance. At the southern end of Richmond Road the site tapers down to the canal.

The Richmond Road entrance leads into a long irregularly-shaped yard. Until shortly before this survey the yard was full of small trees and undergrowth having been abandoned for nearly twenty years (Fig. 12). The buildings cluster around the yard in what appears to be a rather untidy unity giving the impression that each phase was squeezed into the available space. This may be a consequence of amalgamating two separate works. Much of the yard is surfaced with concrete or tarmac. A raised rectangle of brick and concrete shows where the rectangular building shown on the 1946 map was located opposite Block C. There is evidence of a number of other demolished buildings which were attached to the rear south-west side of the Coleshill Road ranges. Other factory buildings, including a large chimney stack, have been removed along the public house and terraced houses boundaries.

Plans and elevations of the buildings are shown in Appendix 1 of this report. Where available the existing drawings supplied by the client were modified to suit the requirements of this survey. Other drawings were drawn from measurements taken during the survey.



Figure 7 Site building identification letters
See Appendix 1 for main plans and elevations



Figure 8 Coleshill Road elevation
Looking east towards the canal bridge



Figure 9 Coleshill Road elevation
Looking south from the crest of the canal bridge
From left to right: Canal bridge, Building O/P, Building Q, Building R, Building U/T



Figure 10 north-east facing elevation along canal (northern end)
Looking south from Coleshill Road over bridge parapet. Building N on foreground

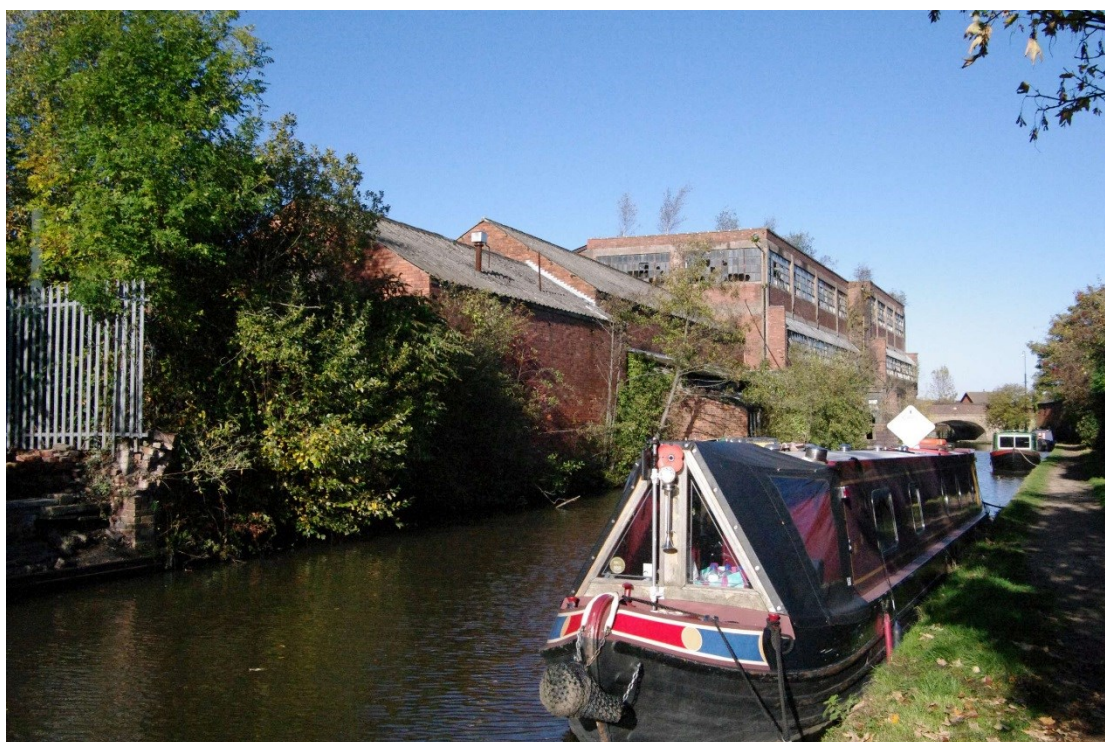


Figure 11 North-east facing elevation over canal (southern end)
Looking north-west towards the Coleshill Road canal bridge



Figure 12 Yard area
Looking north along canal-side buildings. Building A/B in foreground

Block A/B

Block A/B is a red-brick rectangular structure with a post-war corrugated sheeting roof. It follows a north-west to south-east orientation and is located at the southern end of the Britannia Works alongside the canal (see Fig. 7 above). It is not entirely clear why this was given two reference letters as it is a single structure. The machine-made bricks are laid in courses of three stretchers to one header with a partially decorative single course of bricks just above ground level on the yard side. The building appears to have had a number of modifications to its openings during its lifetime. A sign over one of the loading bay doors states it to be the wool warehouse although there is also evidence that this was also used as the boiler house. A building is shown on the 1889 OS map and it may be one of the surviving former Richmond Mill buildings although the window design appears to be early 20th century.

The south-east facing gable end has a tall offset 5 x 5-paned metal-framed window with a chamfered blue-brick sill and a concrete lintel (Fig. 13). A circular hole and lower openings with concrete lintels indicate where services ran in or out of the building. The canal-side north-east facing elevation is plain brick with only a single tiny opening (Fig. 14). This gives the impression that all activity in and out of the building was from the south-west facing elevation which looks out into the yard with no connection with the canal. The north-east facing gable end butts against the end wall of Building C.

The south-west facing elevation has undergone many changes during its lifetime (Fig. 15). At the northern end of the elevation a partially bricked-up metal-framed window with a concrete lintel sits above a bricked-up doorway. Two more concrete lintels sit

above a surviving, and probably original, 5 over 3 metal-framed window and a former window which has been modified into a loading bay with a modern roller shutter door.

Internally the building is full-height at its southern end and has a mezzanine floor at the northern end. The roof is supported by four lightweight steel trusses which appear to be original. The stepped dividing wall between the full-height area and the mezzanine is built of brick with some later breeze-block modification (Fig. 16). Inset into the wall is a small boiler (Fig. 17).

The ground floor of the northern end of A/B is reached from inside Building C via a low doorway. The roof height is extremely low and was probably only used as a store. Remnants of equipment survive in this room (Fig. 18). The first floor or mezzanine floored room of A/B was unsafe at the time of the survey so the room was only inspected from the doorway leading from the first floor of Building C (Fig. 19). A set of wooden steps lead down to the mezzanine floor from Building C whilst a further set lead from the mezzanine to the blocked doorway seen on the south-west facing elevation. The room is empty although some lagged pipes run from the boiler into Building C.

The description of Building C/D follows the photographs of A/B.



Figure 13 Building A/B south-east facing gable end
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 14 Building A/B north-east facing elevation
Looking south-west. Building C/D on right



Figure 15 Building A/B south-west facing elevation
Looking north-east. 1m scale



Figure 16 Inside southern end of Building A/B
Looking north-west towards steps up to mezzanine floor



Figure 17 Boiler inside southern end of Building A/B
Looking north-west. 1m scale



Figure 18 Ground floor of Building A/B
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 19 View from Building C onto mezzanine floor of Building A/B
Looking south-east

Building C/D

Building C/D is one of the former Richmond Mill buildings and follows the alignment of Building A/B along the edge of the canal. The building has two storeys and is built of red brick with the same corrugated sheet roof as used on Building A/B. The red bricks are laid in English Garden wall bond with blue bricks being used for the eaves and arched window tops. Blue bricks also form the lower metre of the wall. The windows sills are made from a pale sandstone. Building C forms a long rectangular block with Building D forming a lean-to structure along its eastern side and alongside Building E and the canal. Both structures appear to be shown on the 1889 Ordnance Survey map.

The south-east facing gable end is partially obscured by Building A/B which is also slightly offset from the centreline of C (Fig. 20). Set within the gable is a semi-circular window with blue bricks used as the head. The ridgeline of Building A/B partially cuts across the base of the window indicating that C is the earliest structure of the two. Both corners of this elevation have chamfers at ground floor level which would have allowed people to pass around both sides of the building. The northern end of the building butts against the southern end of Building E and is hidden from view.

The north-east facing elevation of Building C is obscured by lean-to Building D at ground floor level (Fig. 21). Building C has a row of bricked-up windows at first floor level the sills of which are partially obscured by the flashing of the lean-to roofed Building D. The chamfered corner of C and the flashing over the windows suggests that the area covered by Building D may have begun life as a small loading wharf. The north-east facing elevation of Building D has a fairly poor quality red brick wall which is angled at the southern end to follow the side of the canal and presumably the former footprint of the wharf. On top of the wall is a line of wood-framed windows all of very poor quality and repair. The roof is quite low and has a clerestory line to allow light into the narrow space created by Building D.

The south-west facing elevation of Building C faces into the yard and consists of two stories with five bays. A large goods doorway has been inserted into the lower south corner but the remaining segmental arched-headed windows with metal frames survive more or less intact (Fig. 22). A ground floor doorway has been bricked-in with some care being taken to replicate the lower band of blue bricks which run along this elevation.

Inside Building C is a blue brick ground floor with the floor above being supported by cast-iron posts on the eastern side of the room (Fig. 23). On the western side the posts have been replaced by modern I-section posts. Possible triangular bases for machines sit below a row of fume extraction hoods ranged along the western wall. Another machine base is located close to the eastern wall. More of these bases can be seen in Building D. A raised brick-built plinth forms a small loading area adjacent to the inserted doorway seen on the south-west facing elevation. A bearing box for a drive shaft is located on the southern wall in line with the cast-iron posts which have flat plates attached to them to support the drive shaft across the room. The eastern wall has had most of its former windows and a doorway blocked which probably happened when lean-to roof of Building D was added. A single full-height doorway at the northern end of this wall now leads into D.

The first floor of Building C was identified as the showroom in the Morriss survey although no evidence of this use now remains. The room is entered from the adjacent first floor room of Building E at the northern end or from the wooden steps from the mezzanine in Building A/B. Building C has a wooden-plank floor and is open to the roof with its lightweight steel trusses (Fig. 24). The canal-side windows have all been bricked-in but presumably matched those still present on the western wall.

The interior of Building D appears to be a rather makeshift space created when the wharf was covered over (Fig. 25). The roof appears to be present when the 1889 OS map was published. The eastern wall alongside the canal does not have any access to the canal suggesting that direct loading from the factory to the canal ceased when this addition was made. Two more triangular machine bases are located towards the southern end of this room (Fig. 26).

The description of Building E follows the photographs for Buildings C and D.



Figure 20 Building C south-east facing gable end
Looking north. 1m scale. Note chamfered corner. Building A/B on right



Figure 21 North-east facing elevation of Building C and lean-to Building D
Looking north-west. Building F-L on right



Figure 22 South-west facing elevation of Building C
Looking north-east. 1m scale



Figure 23 Building C ground floor
Looking north-west. 1m scale



Figure 24 Building C first floor
Looking north-west. 1m scale



Figure 25 Building D ground floor
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 26 Building D possible machine base at southern end of room
1m scale

Building E

Building E follows the same alignment as Building C but has a slightly wider footprint and so steps out very slightly. Despite this both buildings share the same roofline and eastern wall line. The building is built from red brick and the roof is covered with modern corrugated sheeting material. Both gable ends are obscured by adjacent buildings. This building is shown as part of the Richmond Mill on the 1889 OS map.

The north-east facing elevation is obscured at ground level by Building D but can be seen to butt against Building C at first floor level (Fig. 27). The bricks used for both buildings are very similar to each other. This elevation has a single blocked window which is partially cut by the roofline of D which extends from Building C to overlap this building.

The south-west facing elevation faces into the yard and steps out very slightly beyond the frontage of Building C (Fig. 28). The brickwork appears to have been quite similar to that of Building C but this building has been heavily altered and rebuilt such that most of the northern half of the elevation appears to have mid-20th century bricks. There is evidence of patching and rebuilding across the face of this elevation. At ground floor level are two wide doorways with modern steel RSJ lintels and a third, lower, doorway has been inserted near the southern end. At first floor level a large metal-framed window with a flat wooden lintel and no sill has been added. This may be an older window re-used from elsewhere.

Inside, the ground floor of Building E consists of three equally-sized rooms running across the building from east to west. Each room is divided by a brick wall and is entered from the western side of the building. The centre room has a wooden bench along the southern wall and a blocked window, but which still retains the metal frame, on the west wall (Fig. 29). The northernmost room has signs pinned to the wall saying *BORAX* and *SODA ASH* which suggests that these chemicals were stored here. Also in this room are two wooden racks with wheels and small labels saying *Wilson and Stafford Non-conforming products*. Large wooden doors on the western wall lead out to the yard from two of the rooms.

The first floor of Building E is described in the Morriss report as the Design Studio block. At the time of this survey no evidence of this survived except for remnants of racks or cupboards on the eastern wall. The entrance to this room is from the 1930s block Building F-L which has a slightly higher first floor level. Consequently much of Building E first floor is taken up with a large wooden ramp. At the time of the survey the ramp was in a state of active rot, as was the main floor, and the room was not entered.

The description of Building F-L follows the photographs for Building E.



Figure 27 North-east facing elevation of Building E
Joint between Building C and Building E is arrowed. Building F-L on right



Figure 28 South-west facing elevation of Building E
Looking north-east. 1m scale. Building F-L on left



Figure 29 Building E ground floor, middle room
Looking north-east. 1m scale



Figure 30 Building E first floor seen from Building F
Looking south-west. 1m scale

Building F-L

Building F-L is the large flat-roofed, three-storey, steel-framed building supporting external concrete-frames. Red brick infill forms the non-supporting walls. This long and large building was added in the 1930s to replace most of the former Richmond Mill buildings and, presumably, to reorganise the production when both factories combined. The aerial photograph shows it in place by 1936. As with Buildings A to E it follows the line of the canal but does not interact with it. On both east and west sides most of the walls are glazed in order to allow the maximum light into each floor. Although labelled as Buildings F to L it is in fact a single entity with smaller rooms within it.

The south-east facing end of Building F-L is hidden up to first floor level by adjacent Building E (Fig. 31). Above this however the top, second, floor windows are still visible. Large rectangular, multi-paned and metal-framed windows between the concrete supporting pillars run the length of the elevation. Above the windows is a brick parapet screening the flat roof. The north-east facing elevation is rather more complicated as the main building has to join the rear of the buildings facing onto Coleshill Road which follow a different alignment and have irregular wall lines (Fig. 32). At ground floor level the wall follows an angle from a projection along the north-east facing elevation. At first floor level is a wedge-shaped structure joining this floor with the first floor of Building N. There is no connection to Building N at second floor level and the north-west facing elevation of Building F-L matches that seen on the south-east facing elevation.

The canal-side, north-east facing, elevation is stepped halfway along its length to accommodate a step in the canal bank shown on the 1889 OS map (Figs 33 and 34). This leaves a long recess in the canal between the southern end of this building and the northern end of Building D which is the former wharf area. This entire face seems to have been built to fit every inch of the former Richmond Mill along the canal-side.

At first floor height the wall line of the north-east facing elevation steps back from the canal to form a smaller footprint. The step is located just above the first floor windows and has a sloping glazed top which has the effect of bringing in much more light to the first floor as is discussed below. The glazing on this elevation forms three virtually continuous bands broken only by the concrete pillars.

The north-west facing elevation into the yard closely follows the style of the other elevations of this building with concrete framing and continuous rows of glazing (Figs 35 and 36). At the south-western corner the building steps in to accommodate a loading bay into each floor. The bays are protected by rollers shutters and an I-shaped steel beam runs above the second floor bay showing where a hoist was attached. Next to this is an enclosed stairwell followed by the rows of glazing. At second-floor level is a covered footbridge clad in corrugated sheeting which leads from Building F-L across to Building V.

Internally Building F-L has a ground, first and second floor all providing extremely good light for the workers. The floors are accessed by the enclosed concrete-built stairs in the south-western corner or by a set of wooden stairs built into the wedge-shaped structure at the northern end which joins Building F-L to the rear of Building N. The main supporting structure of this building is a framework of large steel I-beams many

of which bear the name of *Dorman Long Co Middlesbrough*. No machinery or fittings from the hatting industry have survived.

The ground floor consists of a long room which runs alongside the canal with a row of small offices or workshops along the western wall (Fig. 37). At the northern end of the room are a number of other small workshops many of which are in a state of collapse. A brick and breeze-block dividing wall has been inserted near to the southern end of the main room although vandals have now smashed most of this wall. The floor is laid with rectangular paviour blocks which has been overlaid in places with a concrete covering. Deep drainage or service pipe channels run across the floor which may have served machinery within this room. Also serving this room is a bearing box set into the southern wall for a drive shaft. The row of small rooms or workshops along the western side of the room is separated from the main room by a half-height brick wall with glazing above (Fig. 38). Inside the workshops the space is divided into two unequally sized rooms with boarded-over windows on the external, western, wall. Some wooden benches survive in this area (Fig. 39). At the north-western corner of the main room the wall steps out beyond the footprint of Building F-L. This was covered by a flat roof which has now collapsed (Fig. 40). To the south-west of this area are the remnants of a small-brick-built room with evidence of a narrow set of, now removed, stairs leading up to the first floor. A brick wall with 19th century metal-framed windows runs at an angle along the northern side of this area and forms a corridor behind Buildings N and Q. To the east of this wall is a set of wooden stairs leading up to the first and second floors of Building F-L and also to the rear of Building N.

The Morriss report identifies the ground floor as housing the Dyehouse and drying store at the northern end and the steamingshop in the centre. The southern end was used as a store. The side rooms are thought to have been for a secure store and despatch.

The first floor of Building F-L is very much a single open room from end to end (Figs 41-42). The southern part of the room is wider than the northern end which faces out westwards over the collapsed roof of the ground floor room of Building F-L (Fig. 43). The high level of natural light is very apparent on this floor as the floor above has a smaller footprint meaning that the windows have sloping tops which help to create an extremely light working space. A plasterboard partition separates a small area towards the southern end of the room and a rectangular plasterboard office is set to the western side. Behind this office the floor has been boarded over where the small staircase once led up from the ground floor. The stairs would have come out near to the ground floor workshops.

A doorway at the southern end of the first floor main room leads into Building C as discussed earlier. The large open loading bay facing out into the yard is located in the south-western corner next to the enclosed concrete staircase (Fig. 44). At the northern end of the main room is the wooden staircase which is next to a wide doorway leading into Building N.

The second floor of Building F-L has a smaller footprint than the first floor (Figs 45 - 46). Remnants of a number of plasterboard partitions survive which appear to have divided the floor into smaller spaces, as does a breeze-block office structure built against the south-western staircase. On the western side of the room is a small doorway leading to the enclosed footbridge structure leading to the second floor of Building V

(Fig. 47 and also Fig. 36). Although the bridge seems to be a fairly lightweight structure it appears to have been an original feature as there is a deliberate gap for it in the continuous glazing along the wall. A sign on the door from the bridge identifies this as being the Fabric Room.

At the northern end of the second floor are more remnants of partitions suggesting that small offices or workshops were also located at this end of the room. The northern windows face out across the roofs of Buildings N, O and P (Fig. 48). Much of the roof structures are in a state of collapse and are discussed in the sections below.

A ladder adjacent to the south-western concrete stairs leads up onto the flat roof of the building. The roof, which was not closely inspected, has a low parapet and remains of two large I-section girders which held a large, now removed, water tank.

The description of Building N follows the photographs for Building F-L. The list of buildings does not appear to have a Building M.



Figure 31 South-east facing end elevation of Building F-L
Looking west. Building E on left



Figure 32 North-west facing end elevation of Building F-L
Looking south. Building N on right



Figure 33 North-east facing elevation of Building F-L (northern end)
Looking north-west



Figure 34 North-east facing elevation of Building F-L (southern end)
Looking south-west



Figure 35 South-west facing elevation of Building F-L (south end)
Looking north-east. 1m scale. F-L loading bays on right



Figure 36 South-west facing elevation of Building F-L (north end)
Looking east. 1m scale. Bridge leads to Building V on right

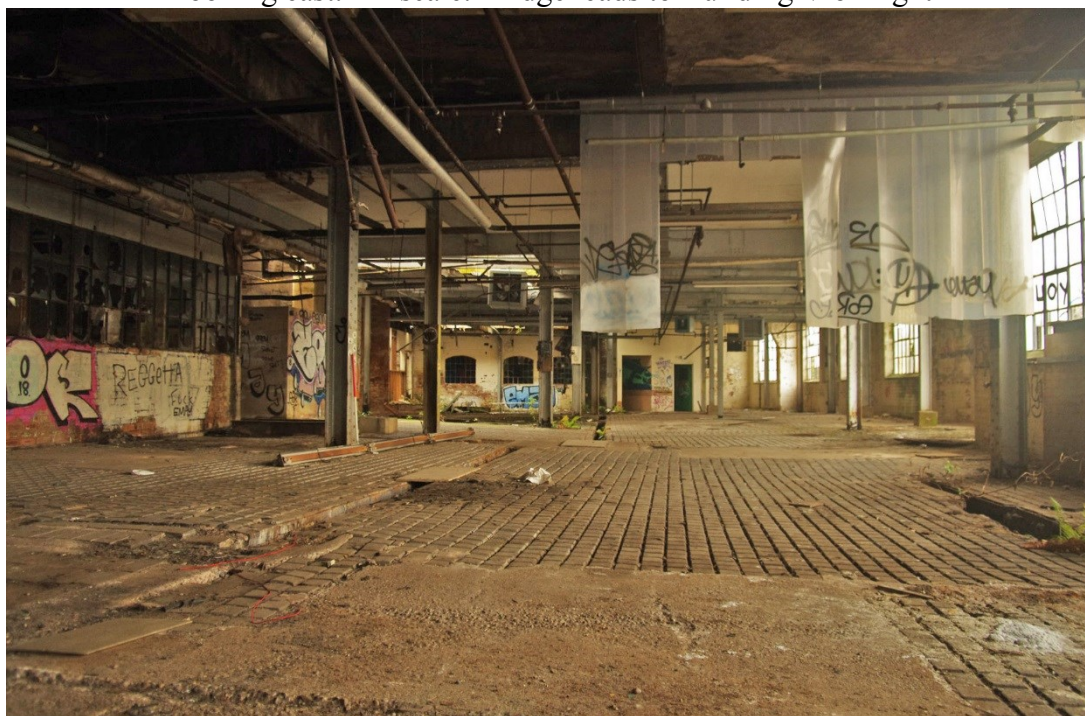


Figure 37 Building F-L ground floor, main room
Looking north. 1m scale. Side rooms/workshops on left



Figure 38 Building F-L ground floor, main room
Looking west towards side rooms/workshops from main room. 1m scale



Figure 39 Building F-L ground floor, side rooms
Looking west. 1m scale



Figure 40 Building F-L ground floor, north-west area of main room
Looking west towards Building R2. Windows of Building R1 on right. 1m scale



Figure 41 Building F-L first floor
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 42 Building F-L first floor
Looking north-west



Figure 43 View westwards from first floor of Building F-L
Building R2 in centre, Building R1 on right



Figure 44 Building F-L first floor, southern end
Looking east. 1m scale. Main staircase on far right. Blue door to Building C in centre



Figure 45 Building F-L second floor
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 46 Building F-L second floor
Looking north-west. 1m scale



Figure 47 Bridge from second floor of Building F-L to Building V
Looking south-west



Figure 48 View across Buildings N, O/P and Q from second floor of Building F-L
Looking north

Building N

The three-storey Building N forms a slightly awkwardly-shaped junction between the rear (south) of Buildings O/P and Q and Building F-L. This building is shown on the 1889 OS map along with the other Britannia Works buildings. The northern wall of Building N has a kink in it as it follows the wall line of O/P and Q which are built on slightly different alignments. Because N is built against the other buildings this elevation is not visible. The south-east facing elevation is only visible in small areas where it forms the end walls of the north-eastern corners of Building F-L. At ground-floor level there is also a low doorway which leads from the south into a basement which extends beneath all of Building N and Building Q. The south-west facing elevation of Building N is obscured by Building R1.

Only the blue-brick north-eastern wall facing out over the canal is fully visible (Fig. 49). This elevation has blocked windows (or possibly loading doors) at ground floor level which is almost at water level height. The segmental-arched heads of these former openings are made from blue bricks and match those on the first floor. The style of brickwork and window heads suggests a mid to late 19th century construction date. The first floor windows have multi-paned metal-framed windows but straight-line joints in the brickwork beneath them suggest that these openings have also been modified and may have been loading doors onto the canal. The second floor windows have also been modified and the flat parapet has been rebuilt which makes it possible that this Building once had a different roof profile. There is a joint in the brickwork between this building and Building O/P to the north which seems to wrap around and butt against Building N which indicates building N is the earlier of the two.

The low-ceilinged basement is reached via a doorway on the southern wall. Because it runs beneath Buildings N and Q it is L-shaped in plan. Although there are four steps leading into the basement area it is only partially below ground and corresponds with the blocked ground floor windows seen on the canal-side elevation. This basement/ground floor area has a red brick floor and a series of cast-iron columns supporting the floor above (Fig. 50). The space is filled with wooden racks which appear to have been used for storage of completed items as one label survives with the designation for top hats for Derby and Ascot. At the time of the survey the supporting timbers appeared to reasonably secure but rainwater was constantly running through the rotten floorboards so only a minimal amount of time was taken in this area. There is evidence of three blocked windows at the north-western end of Building Q which would have faced out onto Coleshill Road. A set of steps leads up to the north-east into the covered access way between Buildings O/P and Q.

The first floor of Building N was not accessible due to the rotten floor boards but could be viewed from a doorway from the access way between Buildings O/P and Q (Fig. 51). It would appear that the first floor is divided into two equally-sized spaces to the east and west. The ceiling is supported by chamfered timber beams which are held by slim cast-iron columns. A doorway on the southern wall leads out to the wooden stairs which access the floors of Building F-L.

The second floor of Building was also too dangerous to enter but had also been divided into two. The partitions which were visible appeared to be made from timber and may therefore be a later addition. A partial inspection of this floor could be made from the northern end of Building F-L which showed the underside of the flat roof and part of a skylight. There are no supporting columns on this floor.

The description of Building O/P follows the photographs for Building N.



Figure 49 North-east facing elevation of Building N
Building N is arrowed. Building F-L on left and O/P on right



Figure 50 Building N basement/ground floor
Looking north-west from Building N to space below Building Q. 1m scale



Figure 51 Building N, first floor
Looking south-west towards doorway to Building F-L



Figure 52 Building N, second floor
Looking north from Building F-L

Building O/P

There is no clear reason why this building, which forms the northern corner of the site has two designation letters as it appears to be a single building. In order to fit into the angle formed by the angle the canal and Coleshill Road this building has a slightly odd shape being broader along its northern end and narrow to the south. This shape matches the outline seen in the 1924 OS map which had changed from the earlier long thin plan shown on earlier maps. As noted above, this building appears to butt against Building N so is later and may represent a rebuilding phase at some time between the 1903 edition of the OS map and the 1924 edition.

The north-west facing elevation on Coleshill Road is a very plain blue-brick frontage with only a pair of windows at first floor level (Fig. 53). The windows have been boarded over but have sloping brick sills and segmental brick heads. There is no evidence of a door onto the street or any other windows on this elevation. The top of the flat parapet wall is brick and has no copings suggesting that the building has been truncated in some way. Butting against the western edge of this face is a large roller-shutter door leading into the vehicle access area between Building O/P and Q.

The north-east facing elevation onto the canal appears to show the building to be a three storey structure although in actual fact the upper two lines of windows both serve the first floor (Fig. 54). At water level there is a line of large limestone blocks set on top of blue bricks. At ground floor level is a metal-framed window with an arched segmental head which appears to be of late 19th century date. If this date is correct then this wall must belong to the earlier structure shown on the 1889 map. Also at ground floor level are three wide metal-framed windows with large concrete lintels which have replaced

the original windows. These windows have brick sills and may date to the pre-1924 rebuilding. At first floor level are five arched windows matching that on the ground floor. The northernmost of these windows has been bricked-in. Further modification can be seen on the top level of windows where a row of five windows with a continuous concrete lintel can be seen. The long concrete lintel echoes that of the 1930s Building F-L and may therefore be of similar date and not pre-1924. Large fume extractor exhausts extend from these windows suggesting that solvents may have been used on this floor. There is no evidence of any earlier windows which might suggest that this entire row of windows with its flat parapet roof has been added during the rebuilding phase.

The south-east facing elevation is hidden by Building N so cannot be seen. The south-west facing elevation faces into the vehicle access passageway leading into the site from Coleshill Road (Fig. 55). Many of the roof tiles are still collapsing into the covered vehicle access passage so only a minimal amount of time was taken in this area. This area has a slightly odd shape being bound by Building O/P to the north-east, Building N to the south-east, Building Q to the north-west and the large roller-shutter door to Coleshill Road. The south-east facing elevation of Building O/P has only two rows of windows, some of which have been modified into loading doors at ground and first floor level. A long timber beam forms the window and door lintels at ground floor level. The beam is supported by brick piers but also has a single cast-iron column close to its southern end where steps lead into the north side of Building N. Large relieving arches spring from pier to pier. It is possible that this once formed an open arcade which has since been infilled with glazed windows and doors. On the same elevation, at first floor level, are multi-paned windows with segmental arched heads above which is what may be the remains of a projecting brick eaves course. If this is the original roofline of the pre-1924 rebuilt building then it must have had an extra floor, or increased height first floor, added later, possibly in the 1930s. This would explain the 1930s style second floor windows on the canal-side elevation.

Inside Building O/P the ground floor is made of concrete with marks suggesting the presence of, now removed, machinery (Fig. 56). There is no basement to this building. The ceiling is supported by unchamfered timber beams supported at either end by brick piers and slim cast-iron columns in the centre. A small goods lift up to the first floor has been added into the north-eastern corner. There are no windows along the Coleshill roadside wall on this floor. There are no internal stairs within this building.

At the time of the survey there was no access to the first floor as the only way in was via Building N with its unsafe floors. However, from the ground it could be seen that this floor had the original multi-paned arched windows with the row of wider windows above it. This floor therefore has two rows of windows with the upper row appearing to be a later addition, possibly added to increase the amount of light in the room.

The description of Building Q follows the photographs for Building O/P.



Figure 53 Building O/P Coleshill Road elevation
Looking south. Building O/P on left of roller-shutter doors to the vehicle access



Figure 54 Building O/P north-east facing elevation
Looking south-west



Figure 55 Building O/P south-west facing elevation
Looking south-east. Building O/P on left, Building N in centre, Building Q on right



Figure 56 Building O/P ground floor
Looking north-west towards Coleshill Road wall

Building Q

Building Q is located on Coleshill Road to the west of Building O/P and the covered access. Building R1 shares the western wall of Building Q and Building N runs along the southern end of Q. This building appears to be shown on the First Edition OS map and is therefore almost certainly one of the early Britannia Works buildings and is of a style suggesting a mid-19th century date. At the time of the survey it was in a very poor state of repair with a collapsed roof structure making access to many areas unsafe.

The north-west facing elevation is the principal elevation and faces out onto Coleshill Road (Fig. 57). The elevation is constructed from dark red bricks with window and arch details in blue bricks. There are three bays each set within a full-height blind arch. At pavement level are the three blocked windows which serve the basement/ground floor already discussed beneath this building and Building N. The windows above the basement have chamfered brick sills and have been boarded over. The top floor windows also have chamfered brick sills but the sills are not as wide. The brickwork for the vehicle access to the east of this elevation has been keyed into the side of Building Q and is especially noticeable as blue bricks have been used whereas Q has dark red/brown bricks. On the western side of Building Q the frontage steps back to butt against the front corner of the adjacent building R1. When the Morriss 2003 report was produced the building still had its hipped roof supported by a king post structure. This has since collapsed and lies in pieces spread across the top floor.

The north-east facing elevation of Building Q faces into the covered access to the side of Building O/P (Fig. 58 and also Fig. 55). At ground level a set of masonry steps leads down into the basement/ground floor below this building and Building N. A row of four multi-paned windows with shallow brick-arched heads and chamfered brick sills form the first floor and match those seen on the Coleshill Road frontage. At second floor level are two similar windows but without any sills. There is also a narrow loading door at first floor level. A dentilled eaves course runs along the top of the wall and now supports the covered roof of the access passage between O/P.

The south-east and north-west facing elevations are obscured by Buildings N and R1.

The basement/ground floor has already been described in the Building N description above. As noted, this area appears to have been built as a single space which suggests that the two buildings are contemporary.

The first floor has an unsafe floor and ceiling and was only inspected from the doorway of Building R1 which has a set of concrete stairs ascending alongside this building (Fig. 59). Transverse stop-chamfered beams are supported by cast-iron columns. Doors also lead into the first floor of Building N – also unsafe. The second floor could not be entered following the collapse of the roof (Fig. 60). Once again this room can be seen from the concrete stairs of Building R1. Debris covers most of the space but it appears that the room was open to the full height of the hipped roof.

The description of Building R and R1 follows the photographs for Building Q.



Figure 57 Building Q north-west facing elevation
Looking south-east. 1m scale. Covered access to left, Building R to right

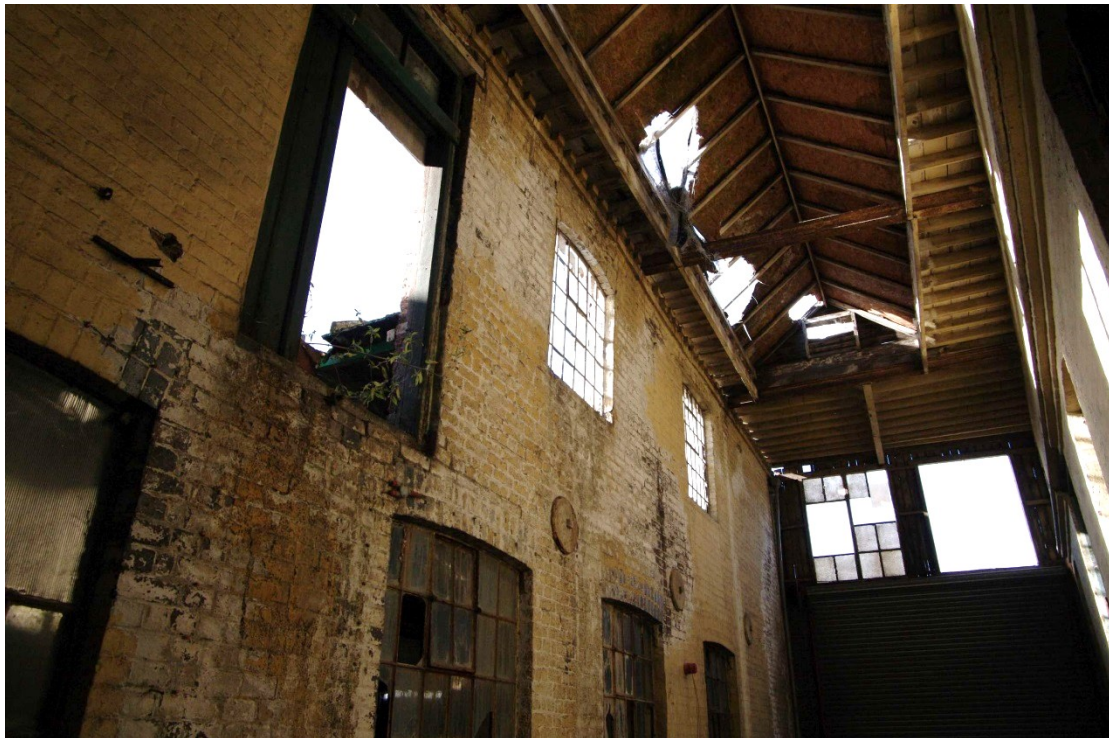


Figure 58 Building Q north-east facing elevation
Looking north-west. Roller shutters to Coleshill Road on right



Figure 59 Building Q first floor
Looking north from Building R1 doorway



Figure 60 Building Q second floor
Looking east from Building R1 doorway

Building R, R1 and R2

Building R, R1 and R2 is effectively a single building with two wings running back from a front range facing out onto Coleshill Road. It is located to the west of Building Q and to the east of a covered vehicle access passage which separates it from Building U/T. The easternmost wing, which also wraps around the southern side of Building N, has been identified as R1. The portion of R1 along Building N appears to be of a later date than the rest of R1 but is still shown on the 1889 OS map. An extension of the westernmost rear range has been identified in earlier reports as Building R2. Its relationship with Building Q indicates that it is earlier in construction date and is likely to post-date the 1835 OS map but be before the mid-19th century. As such it may be the first, or at least the earliest surviving, building from the original Britannia Works.

The main red brick elevation of Building R houses the only pedestrian entrance from Coleshill Road. The north-west facing elevation onto Coleshill Road consists of a three-storeyed structure with three bays (Fig. 61). At ground floor level is a 6 over 6 wooden framed sash window with a projecting moulded cornice and a stone sill. The top of the cornice shows signs of rusting and may be made from cast-iron. In the centre of the ground floor is a wide 3-centred vehicle archway leading to a wide passageway between the rear wings. This has a relatively modern wrought-iron gate fitted. To the east of the archway the ground floor elevation has been modified by adding a skin of later, possibly post-WWII, bricks which surround a wide doorway with a stone lintel decorated with a neo-classical scroll. It is not clear whether this skin masks an earlier modified window nor exactly why it has been added. The second-floor windows have been boarded over but have wooden frames and possibly the same cast-iron cornices and stone sills as on the ground floor. The same pattern can be seen on the second floor beneath the projecting eaves cornice. The tiled roof has a fairly low pitch and has a double chimney stack at each gable end.

The eastern wall of Building R is obscured by Buildings N and Q. The covered ground floor central passageway has a number of single doorways into the ground floor offices and rooms and a low ceiling which is partially collapsing (Fig. 62). The south-west facing elevation faces across another covered passageway which separates this building from Building U/T (Fig. 63). At ground floor level the northern end of this elevation consists of painted brickwork with no doors or windows. The rear wing R1 can be seen as a three storeyed building at its south-western corner and south-eastern facing elevation and is best viewed from the second floor windows of Building F-L (see Fig. 43). Where the rear range has been identified as R2 the south-west facing elevation is of two storeys with a lean-to corrugated sheet roof (Fig. 64). At higher levels the elevation is obscured by Building U/T which butts against it. The north-east facing elevation of R2 shows evidence of extensive rebuilding and modification above the metal-framed windows (see Fig. 75). This may suggest that the original roof was a gabled structure which has since been rebuilt.

Inside the front range of Building R along Coleshill Road the ground floor consists of two small rectangular rooms neither of which could be entered due to collapsed masonry and sealed entrances. The first floor of Building R also has a semi-collapsed floor which was unsafe to enter (Fig. 65). The windows are vertical sliding sash windows as seen on the ground floor room. Although this room could only be inspected from the doorway it could be seen that this area was probably used as office space and had the remains of matchboard dado panelling around the walls. The fact that the

current room has a fireplace (blocked) at either end suggests that this was originally two rooms. Built along the south-western side of the first floor rooms is a narrow corridor which joins wings R1 and R2 without the need to walk through the front room of R (Fig. 66). The corridor is built of relatively modern materials probably from the second half of the 20th century. At the time of the survey it was in a state of collapse.

The second floor of Building R was also collapsing and was not entered (Fig. 67). As with the floor below this room may have been subdivided and has remains of dado panelling along the walls and possible cupboards to the side of the chimney breast. The roof trusses are partially visible below the ceiling level in this room and appears to be fairly simple in design with raking struts supported by the tie-beams.

A set of modern concrete stairs built against the south-eastern corner of Building R and the north-western corner of Rear wing R1 allowed safe access up through R1 and also allowed inspection of the unsafe floors of adjacent Building Q (Fig. 68). At ground floor level of Rear wing R1 only the concrete stairs and two toilet cubicles could be entered. The portion of R1 which wraps around the rear of Building N forms a corridor leading from Building F-L and has a brick floor with metal-framed windows facing out into F-L (see Fig. 40).

None of the first floor of R1 was accessible at the time of the survey due to a variety of collapsed structures which blocked entry. The second floor of R1 appears to consist of a single long room running from the rear of Building R which connects with another room which links with Building F-L. Both rooms had unsafe floors and so were not entered. Despite this the rooms could be viewed from the doorways and showed that both were empty of any fixtures or fittings and had been partitioned with modern stud walls. The room running out from the rear of Building R has a partially visible roof truss which is of very simple design with bolted king post trusses (Fig. 69). The range extending from Building F-L had a modern low ceiling which obscured the roof trusses (Fig. 70).

A set of narrow wooden stairs used to rise from the ground floor and serve all floors of Building R and the rear wing of R2 but these have now collapsed (Fig. 71). These stairs may have been the only access to the upper floors when the building was first constructed. If this is the case then only pedestrian access would have been possible and no finished goods or raw materials would have been processed in these areas. At ground-floor level there is a small office with a large fireplace (Fig. 72). The door from the covered passageway into this room has been sealed but an inspection could be made through the metal-framed multi-paned window. All fittings have been removed from this room including the fireplace but the size and layout suggests that this was a room of some importance. To the south of this room is a narrow passageway running across the wing allowing access to the main outside yard. The passageway has a beaded-plank wall with a panelled plank door which appeared to have had a wooden lock case which has recently been removed (Fig. 73). The small room created by the plank partition has a low brick plinth with a stone block on top which has a small hollowed-out depression in it. The function of this is unclear. To the south of this small room is the southernmost room of R2. This has been partially combined with the northern end of Building F-L and is now open on the eastern side (Fig. 74). The heavy timbers of this roof have suffered in a recent fire making the area unsafe. However the fire has created holes in

the ceiling allowing limited views of the first floor which appears to have very limited head-height due to the rebuilt lean-to roof.

The description of Building T follows the photographs for Building R, R1 and R2



Figure 61 Building R north-west facing elevation
Looking south-east. 1m scale. Building U/T on right



Figure 62 Passageway beneath Building R
Looking south-east from Coleshill Road. R1 on left, R2 on right



Figure 63 Northern end of passageway between Buildings R and T
Looking north-west towards Coleshill Road gate. Building R on right



Figure 64 Southern end of passageway between Buildings R2 and U/T
Looking north-west towards covered portion of passageway (see Fig 63).
Building R on right



Figure 65 Building R first floor, eastern room
Looking north



Figure 66 Building R, corridor to rear of first floor room
Looking south-west. 1m scale



Figure 67 Building R second floor
Looking west



Figure 68 Rear wing R1 stairs at ground floor level
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 69 Rear wing R1 second floor
Looking south-east from Building R towards the part of R1 which turns and connects with Building F-L.



Figure 70 Rear wing R1 second floor
Looking north-east from stairs of Building F-L. Plasterboard partition to rest of R1 on right.



Figure 71 Building R, R2 stairs at ground floor
Looking north. 1m scale



Figure 72 Rear wing R2 ground floor office
Looking south-west through window



Figure 73 Rear wing R2 ground floor passageway
Looking south-west. 1m scale



Figure 74 Rear wing R2 ground floor southernmost room
Looking south-east. 1m scale. Building F-L on left



Figure 75 Rear wing R2

Looking north-west from Building F-L. R2 in centre, U/T and V on left, R1 on right

Building T

Building T consists of a three-storey red brick structure which faces out onto Coleshill Road on the western side of Building R (Fig. 76). A clear joint in the brickwork can be seen where Building T butts against Building R, to the east, and Building U to the west. All three buildings appear to be shown on the First Edition 1889 OS map.

On the north-west facing elevation onto Coleshill Road a covered passageway with a wide blue-brick segmental arch runs beneath to north-eastern corner of this building. Blue-brick detailing is also used for the chamfered sills and segmental arches of the windows. The detailing is very similar to that used on Building Q. At ground floor level are three such windows one of which is unboarded and shows that they have (or had) metal-framed multi-paned windows. Also at ground level is a bricked-up pedestrian entrance with a stone lintel. The first-floor windows are the same as those on the ground floor but are shorter on the second floor. The gable-ended roof is covered with grey tiles which extend over the adjacent Building U.

None of the south-west facing elevation can be seen as it butts against Building U. The south-east facing elevation has been obscured by the construction of Building V which is built against it. Only the ground floor of the north-east facing elevation of Building T is visible as part of the covered access. This wall has a wide doorway with a sign identifying the area as the dispatch room (see Fig. 63). Two smaller doorways lead into two small rooms.

Inside, the ground floor of Building T is a single open room which is divided from Building U by two short stubs of wall. The floor is laid with brick and the ceiling is supported by two stop-chamfered beams which are supported by delicate cast-iron

columns (Fig. 77). The infilled doorway to Coleshill Road can be seen in the north-west corner but there is no evidence of any internal divisions within this room. Wide openings on the south-east wall have been knocked through into Building V. These have probably been modified from smaller doors or windows as the lintels are now supported by steel beams. As there are no stairs to the first floor in this building a set modern steel stairs built into the north-eastern corner of Building V has to be used to gain access to the upper floors. It is not clear where the original stairs were located.

The first floor room of Building T has an unsafe floor so could not be entered. However it could be viewed from the doorway between Building V and this room which showed it to form a continuous long room stretching across both Building T and Building U (Fig. 78). Slender cast-iron columns support the ceiling. Where the wall between the two buildings has been removed a large I-section steel beam has been inserted as a support. A doorway on the east wall leads to the inserted corridor which runs behind Building R. No access could be gained to the second floor of Building T due to the unsafe condition of the top floor of Building V.

The description of Building U follows the photographs for Building T.



Figure 76 Building T north-west facing elevation onto Coleshill Road
Looking south-west. 1m sale. Building U with darker bricks on right



Figure 77 Building T ground floor
Looking south. 1m scale. Ground floor of Building U behind wall with “OZ” graffiti.
Building V through gap in wall in centre



Figure 78 Building T first floor
Looking north-west. The first floor of Building U is beyond the stub of wall to the left

Building U

Building U appears to have been built as an extension on the western side of Building T. The main frontage faces north-westwards onto Coleshill Road and has the same style of chamfered brick sills and segmental window arches (Fig. 79). The roofline is continuous between the two buildings and now shares the same tile covering although this appears to be a later re-covering rather than the original. The dentilled eaves of Building U continue from Building T. Despite the attempt to match the earlier building the bricks used in Building U are much darker resulting in a clearly different façade.

The south-west facing elevation butts against the eastern gable end of the Maid of the Mill public house. The lower half of the gable is built with pale coloured bricks but the upper half uses the dark red bricks used on the north-west facing elevation. The public house is earlier than Building U and has had its chimney extended twice to rise above the height of Building U's gable end (Fig. 80). There are no openings on this plain brick gable end of U.

At ground floor level the south-east facing elevation of Building U now faces into a rectangular covered area which began life as a small open courtyard. The space has now been covered over with a late 20th century sloping roof. A modern opening, supported by I-section steel beams now leads from inside building U into the former courtyard. To the side of this new opening are the original blocked single doorway and window. The remainder of this elevation can only be viewed from the first floor window of Building V (Fig. 81). The window details match those on the Coleshill Road elevation but on this elevation the bricks used for the main wall are the same as on Building T rather than the darker red bricks used at the front. Whilst the building appears to be of a single phase the different coloured bricks may suggest supply problems whereby non-matching bricks had to be used on the front elevation.

Inside Building U, the ground floor forms a single open space very similar in form to the adjacent room in Building T. The two rooms, as discussed above are separated by a brick wall which has had two large openings broken through (Fig. 82 and see Fig. 77). Two cast-iron columns support substantial transverse stop-chamfered timber beams. The tops of the columns in are different in each room. A modern stud wall partition on the western wall houses a wooden chute down from the first floor. This was presumably for sending down finished goods into the dispatch area but may have begun life as the original staircase.

Due to a very unsafe floor the first floor room of Building U is only visible from the eastern corner of Building T. As already noted the first floor of Buildings T and U have been opened to create a single room with the former supporting wall being replaced by a large steel beam (see Fig. 78). The second floor could not be reached due to unsafe flooring.

The description of Building T follows the photographs for Building U.



Figure 79 Building U north-west facing elevation onto Coleshill Road
Looking south-east. 1m scale



Figure 80 Building U north-west and south-west facing elevations
Looking east. 1m scale



Figure 81 Building U south-east facing elevation
Looking at first and second floors from Building V.



Figure 82 Building U ground floor
Looking north-west. 1m scale

Building V

Building V extends south-eastwards from the rear elevations of Buildings T and U. Buildings T and U follow the site boundaries and limited available space which creates a slight taper in their ground plan. Because it follows the wall lines of the other two buildings Building V has a distinctly wedge-shaped outline. The building extends southwards and has a step in its southern end to allow space for Building F-L. The date of construction is unclear but the available OS maps suggest that up until the publication of the 1924 edition this area was covered in a number of assorted buildings of unknown height and function. The 1936 aerial photograph clearly shows the building in place at this date. The three storey building consists of red brick with metal-framed windows and large concrete sills and lintels. Although lacking the largescale glazing seen on Building F-L it seems likely that both buildings are of a similar date to each other which must be between 1924 and 1936.

The south-west facing elevation forms the boundary with the public house garden (Fig. 83). This elevation has large areas of plain brick wall uninterrupted by windows which are grouped towards the northern end. The top of the wall ends in a flat parapet which hides a long and narrow pitched roof. The flat parapet appears to be an attempt to match the style of Building F-L. Towards the southern end of the south-west facing elevation the parapet steps down where an internal toilet block and stairs are located. Remnants of another set of stairs butt against the southern corner of the elevation. These stairs have a separate roof but bear the scar where a large structure has been demolished. Prior to demolition the Britannia Works was well known for its large chimney which formed part of this now demolished structure. At second-storey height there is a small footbridge which runs across to the second floor of Building F-L. Due to the height differences the bridge has a slight upwards slope to reach Building F-L.

The south-east facing elevation of Building V consists of two elevations where the building steps out at its southern end. The elevation containing the toilet block and stairs again has small windows with concrete lintels similar to those on the south-west facing elevation (Fig. 84). The other part of the south-east facing elevation is the step where the south-east corner decreases in width to avoid Building F-L or its predecessor. This elevation has larger windows but is still of the same style as elsewhere on this building (Fig. 85).

The north-east facing elevation of Building V is also stepped to respect Building F-L (Figs 85 and 86). This elevation has large metal-framed windows to allow light into what is a very dark part of the site. The smaller toilet-block windows and pipes are visible at the southern end of the elevation. A wide loading door is located on each floor close to its junction with the rear of Building T. The footbridge on the second floor projects out from a former window showing that the bridge was a modification. Where the bridge joins F-L appears to be part of the original design so it would seem likely that Building V slightly pre-dates F-L.

Inside, the ground floor of Building V is constructed using a steel frame with concrete floors which creates a large open space (Fig. 87). The steel beams bear the name of *Dorman Long Co Middlesbrough* who are the same suppliers as in Building F-L. Running across the concrete and brick floors are a series of open and deep drainage channels. A sign on one of the doors states this to be the steaming room which, presumably, would have required extensive drainage. In the north corner of the room

are two small rooms with breeze-block walls. The northernmost of the rooms contains a flight of steel stairs used to gain access to the upper floors of this building and the floors of Building T and U. At the southern end of the main ground floor room is a small toilet block but with a blocked doorway preventing entry from this floor. An instruction note pinned to the wall gives instructions about steaming hats and is reproduced in Appendix 2 at the end of this report.

The first floor of Building V also consists of a large open space with enclosed steel stairs at the northern end of the room (Figs 88 and 89). Either side of the stairs are open doorways into the first floor rooms of Building T and U. Another doorway on the north-east wall leads to the partially collapsed corridor running across the rear of Building R. At the southern end of the room as well as the toilet block there is another set of steel stairs leading up to the second floor and also to the footbridge across to Building F-L. Close to the western foot of the stairs on this floor is the stub of remaining building with stairs leading down to the outside yard. These stairs appear to be the last surviving portion of the now-demolished structures which were located to the south-west of Building V (see Fig. 83).

The second floor of Building V has a long pitched roof supported by lightweight angle-iron trusses (Fig. 90). This roof has collapsed and a large amount of vegetation has grown over the floor. This appeared unsafe so the room was not entered.



Figure 83 Building V south-west facing elevation
Looking north. Northern end of Building F-L on right



Figure 84 Building V south-east facing elevation
Looking north-west. 1m scale. Note stairs and building remnant on left



Figure 85 Building V north-east facing elevation (southern end)
South-east facing elevation on right. Bridge to Building F-L top centre



Figure 86 Building V north-east facing elevation (northern end)
Looking north-east. Covered access beneath Building T to Coleshill Road on right



Figure 87 Building V ground floor
Looking south



Figure 88 Building V first floor
Looking south. Stairs and toilet block centre right



Figure 89 Building V first floor
Looking north-east towards doorway in Building U (to right of window)



Figure 90 Building V second floor
Looking north-west from southern staircase

Discussion

The buildings at the Britannia Works represent a rather eclectic mix of structures which are the natural result of two competing factories combining and rationalising their production needs. That each addition and modification does not appear to match may reflect the sometimes hand-to-mouth and tenuous existence of the hatting industry. Each addition seems to have been inserted into the available space rather than undergoing a wholesale redevelopment. The most significant change appears to have been the Buildings F-L and Building V in the late 1920s or early 1930s. This was probably to create a single production site rather than the duplicated workshops which belonged to Richmond Mill and the Britannia Works. Unfortunately at the time of this survey the buildings had been empty for a considerable time which has resulted in serious damage to many of them. There is also little or no evidence surviving of its function as a major hat producer.

The shell of Building C is likely to be the earliest building on the site although it has been heavily modified since that date. The building dates from the early to mid-19th century. Building C was originally part of the Richmond Mill site as is the lean-to structure D which began life as a small canal-side wharf before being given a roof in the later 19th century. Building E is slightly later in date to C but again has seen extensive rebuilding both inside and out. Building A/B is also from the Richmond Mill era but is probably later 19th century in date. No other Richmond Mill buildings survive having all been swept away to construct the modern Building F-L in the 1920s or 1930s.

The earliest of the Britannia Works buildings is probably Building R which is of mid-19th century date with slightly later rear wings R1 and R2. The corner of R1, to the rear of Building N, may be later and of later 19th or early 20th century date. Most of R2 is of similar date to R but has been extensively rebuilt by changing the roof profile and amalgamating it with Building F-L. Building Q seems likely to be the next oldest in the original Britannia Works buildings and has a later mid-19th century construction date. This would make it very slightly older than Building N.

Building T probably comes next in the sequence as it is shown on the 1889 OS map but is of later 19th century in its style. The decision to extend Building T seems to have taken place soon after its construction and resulted in Building U, which is also shown on the 1889 map. Despite their close construction dates it is curious why the brickwork of the two buildings does not match. This mismatch follows the earlier trend of subsequent buildings not matching earlier ones and may simply reflect the attitude of the owners that function was more important than style.

A major effort to rebuild the site as a single works can be seen in the construction of Building V which was constructed in the late 1920s. Soon after this date the large Building F-L appeared and completed the sequence of surviving buildings.

Overall the Britannia Works buildings appear to mirror the ups and downs of the hatting industry and the probable short-term outlook that the owners were forced to take. Despite this the history of the hatting industry in Atherstone is extremely important which raises the significance of the Britannia Works buildings above their aesthetic qualities. As the last surviving hat works they have a prominent part in the history of the town.

Archive

The archive consists of:

This report,
6 A4 contact sheets of 217 digital images,
DVD of digital images in tiff format,
5 A4 photograph record sheets.

Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the appropriate local historical journal in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. OASIS is an online index to archaeological grey literature.

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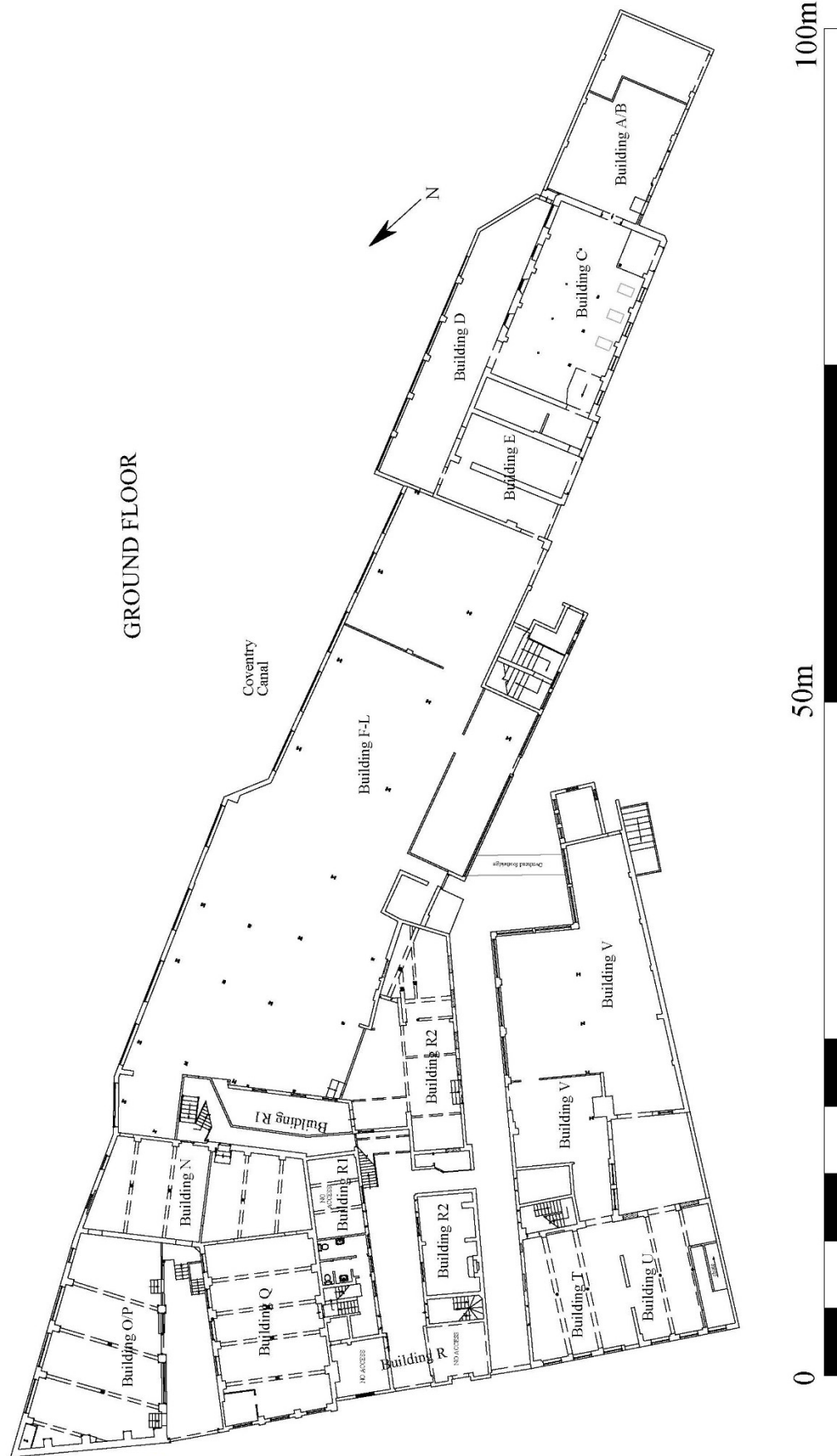
Websites:

<https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EPW050400>

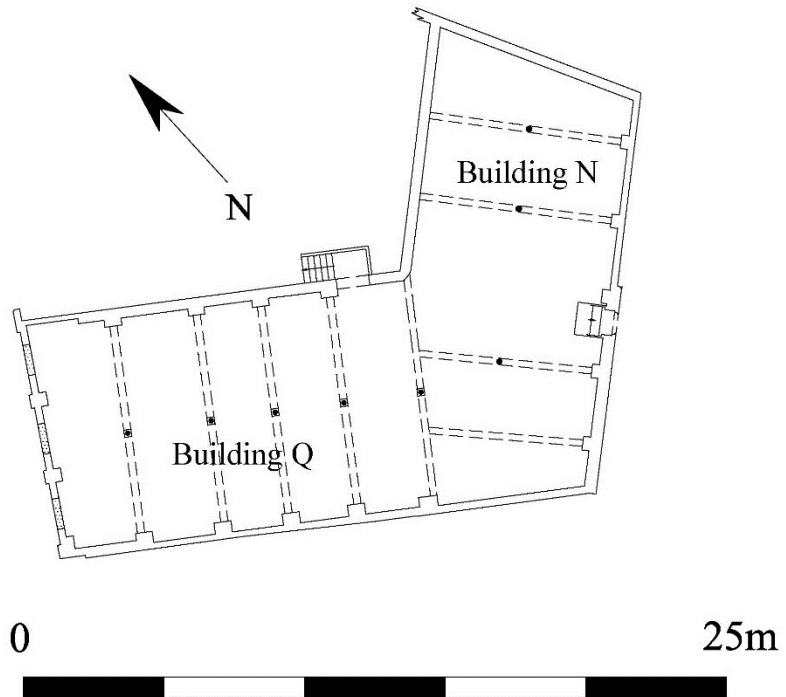
Andrew Hyam
ULAS
University of Leicester
08.01.2019

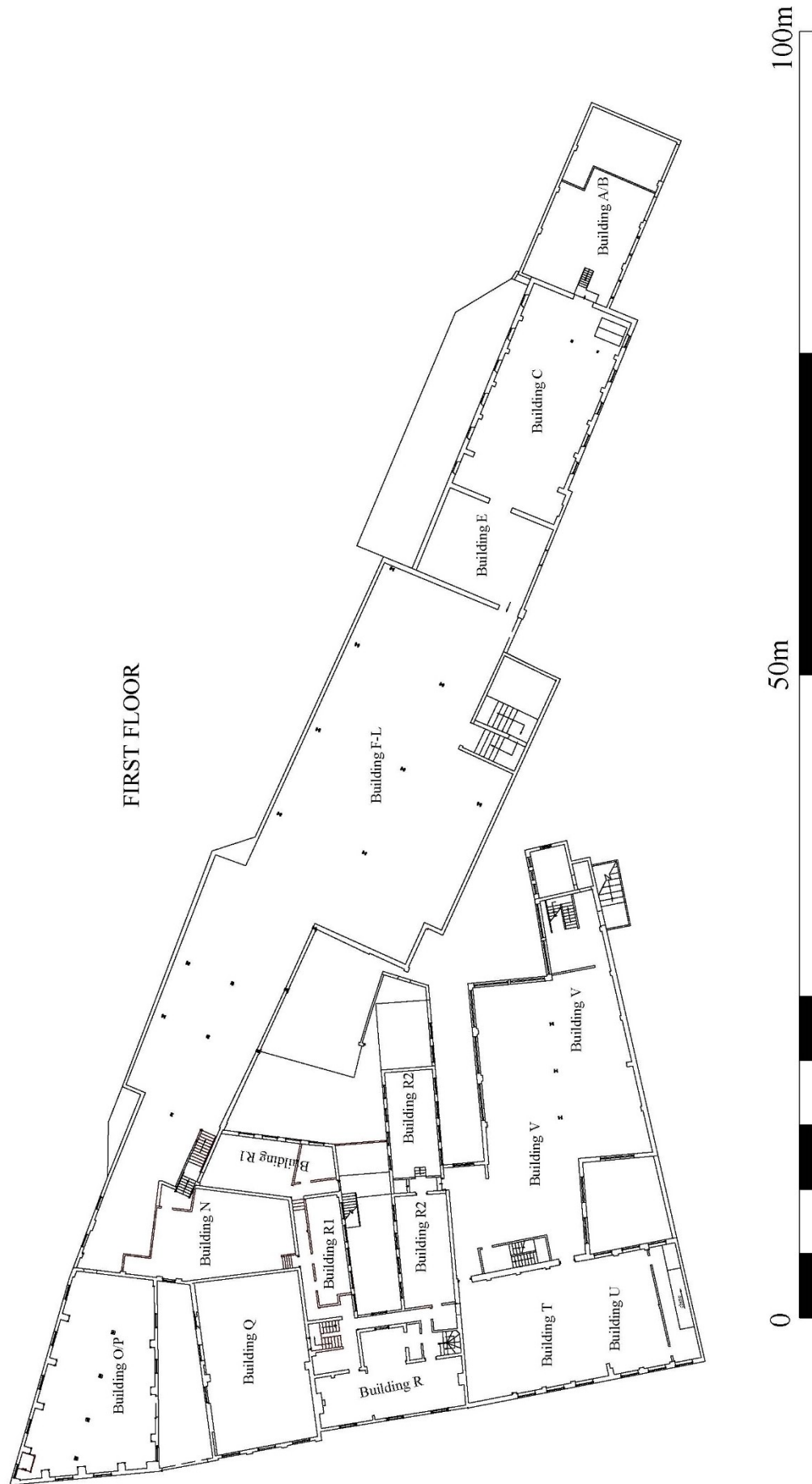
Appendix 1 Plans and Elevations

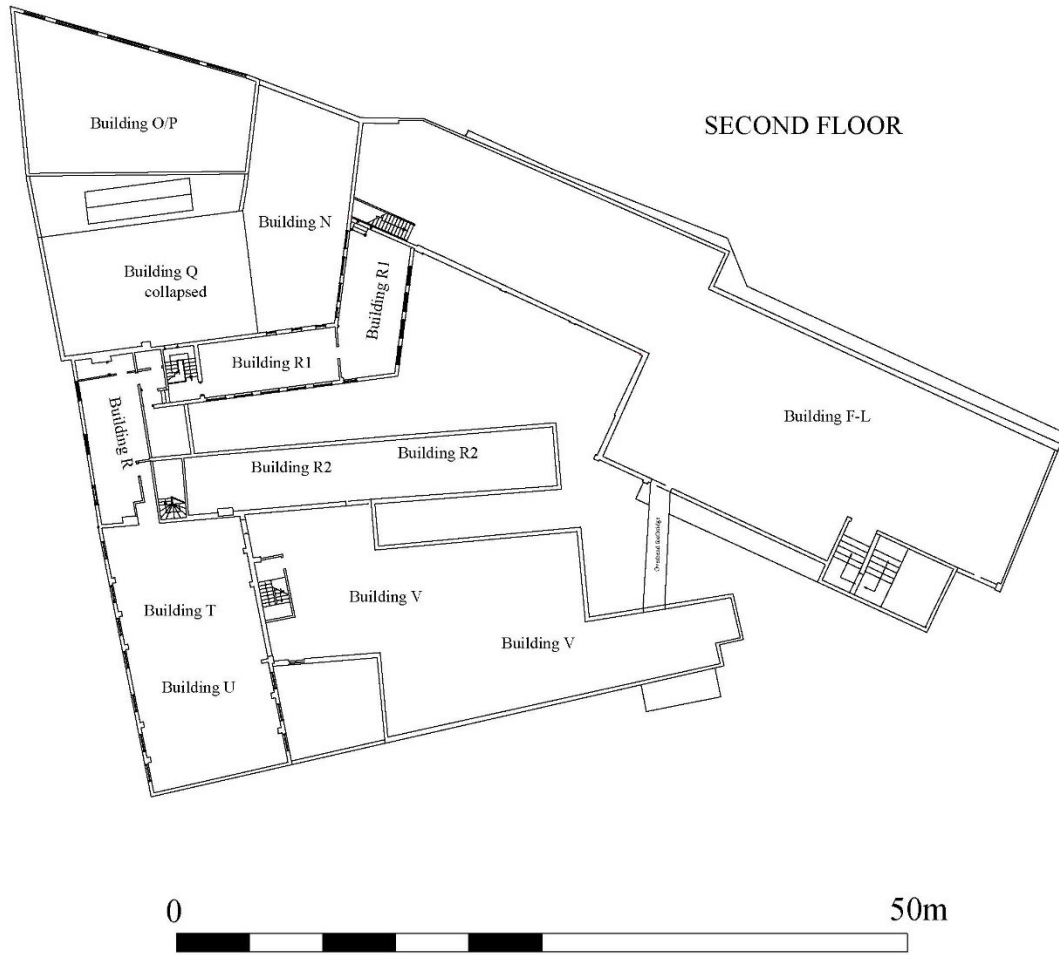
Most drawings modified from those drawn by Kevin R Twigger Associates Ltd. Other plans were drawn during this survey.

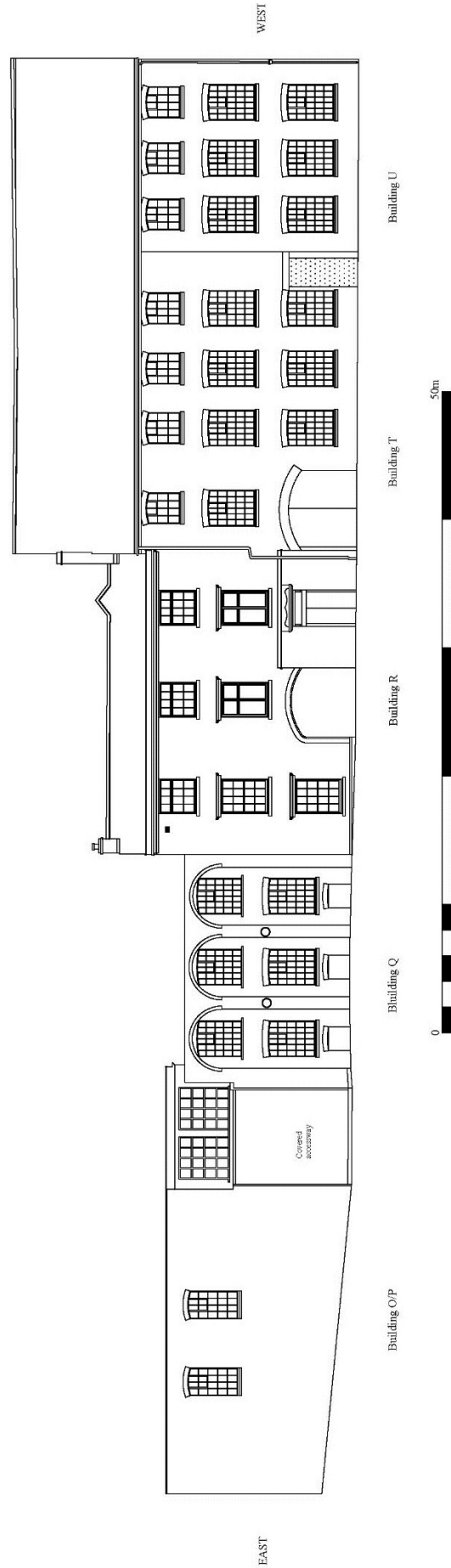


Semi basement/ground floor

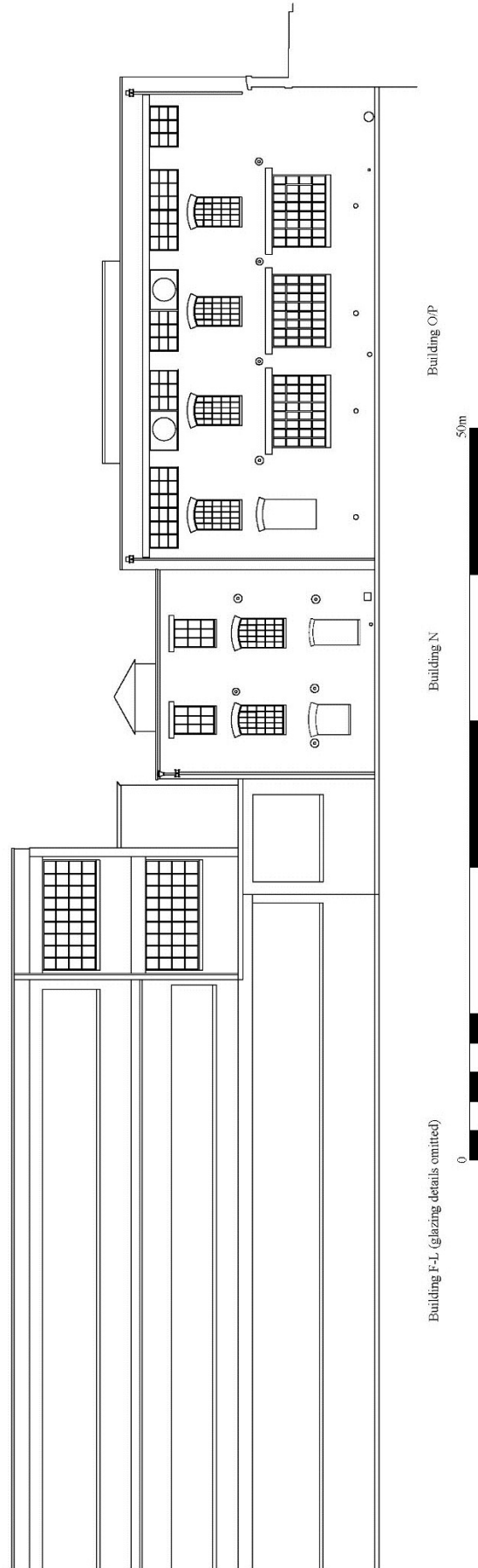




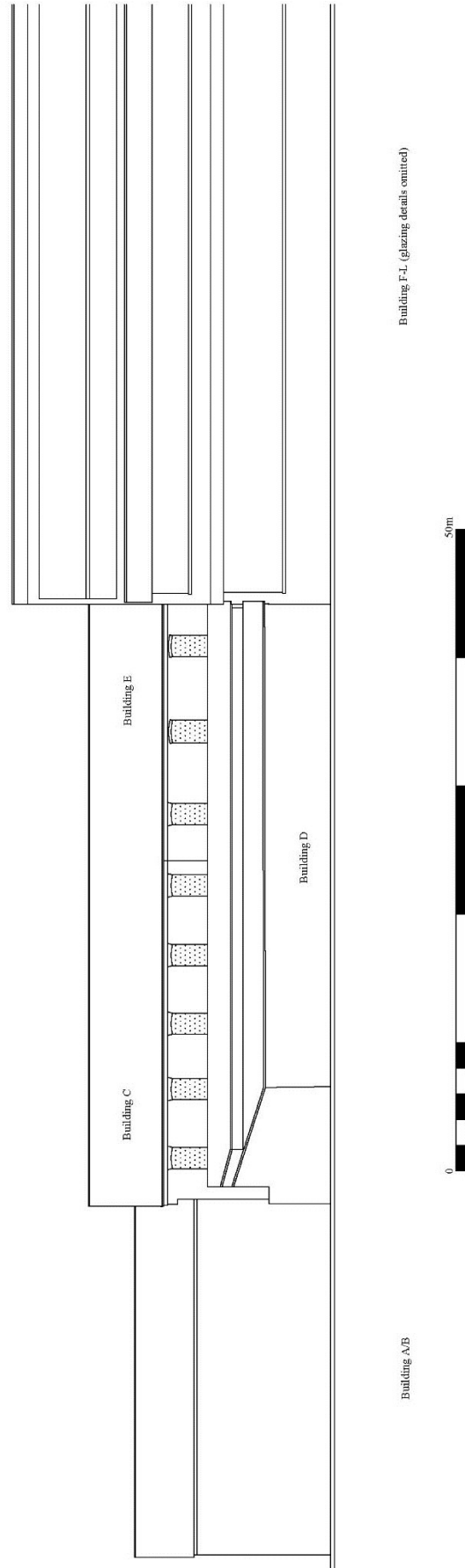




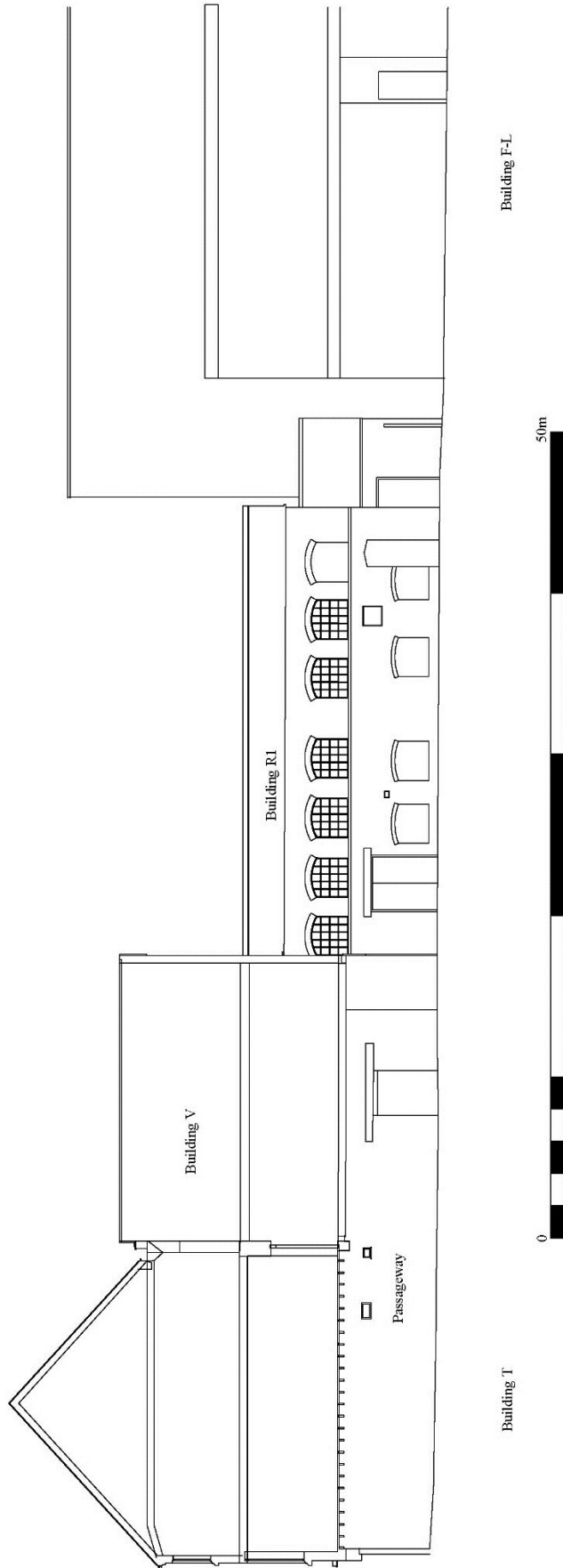
North-west facing elevation onto Coleshill Road



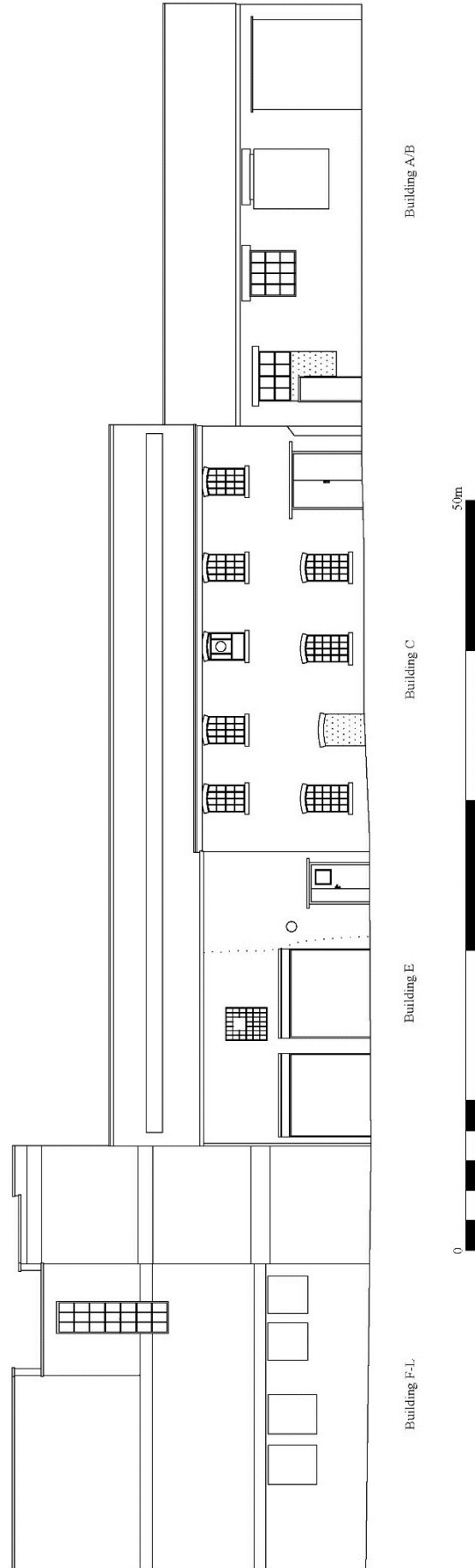
North-east facing elevation over canal (northern end)



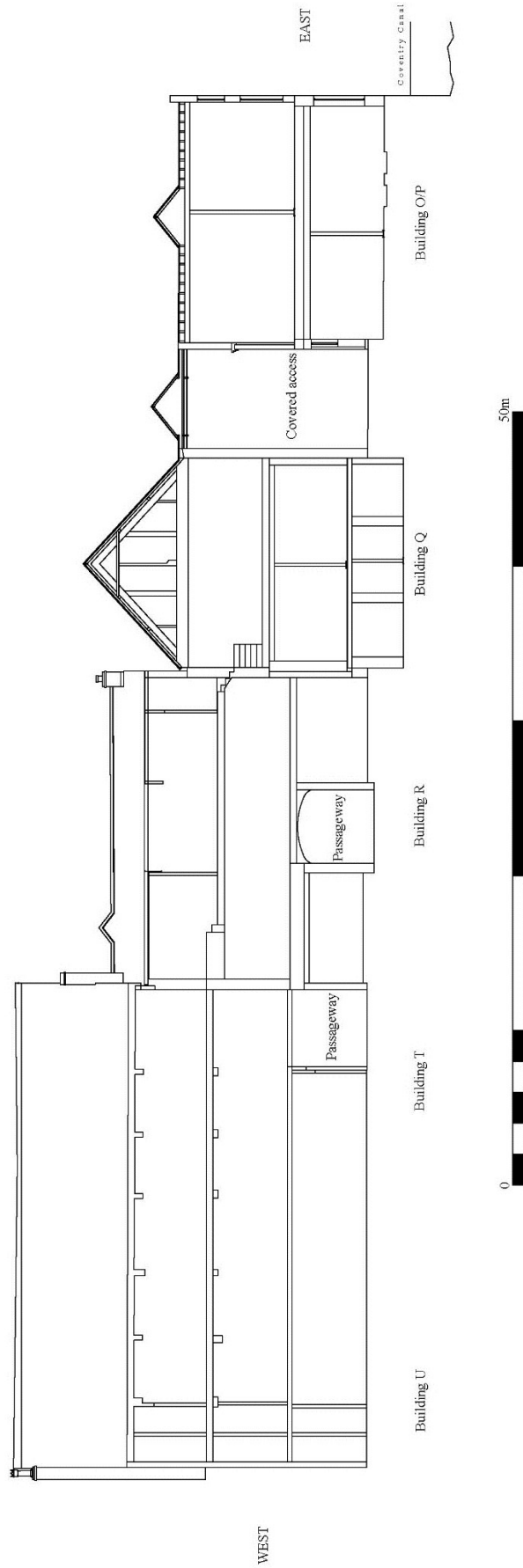
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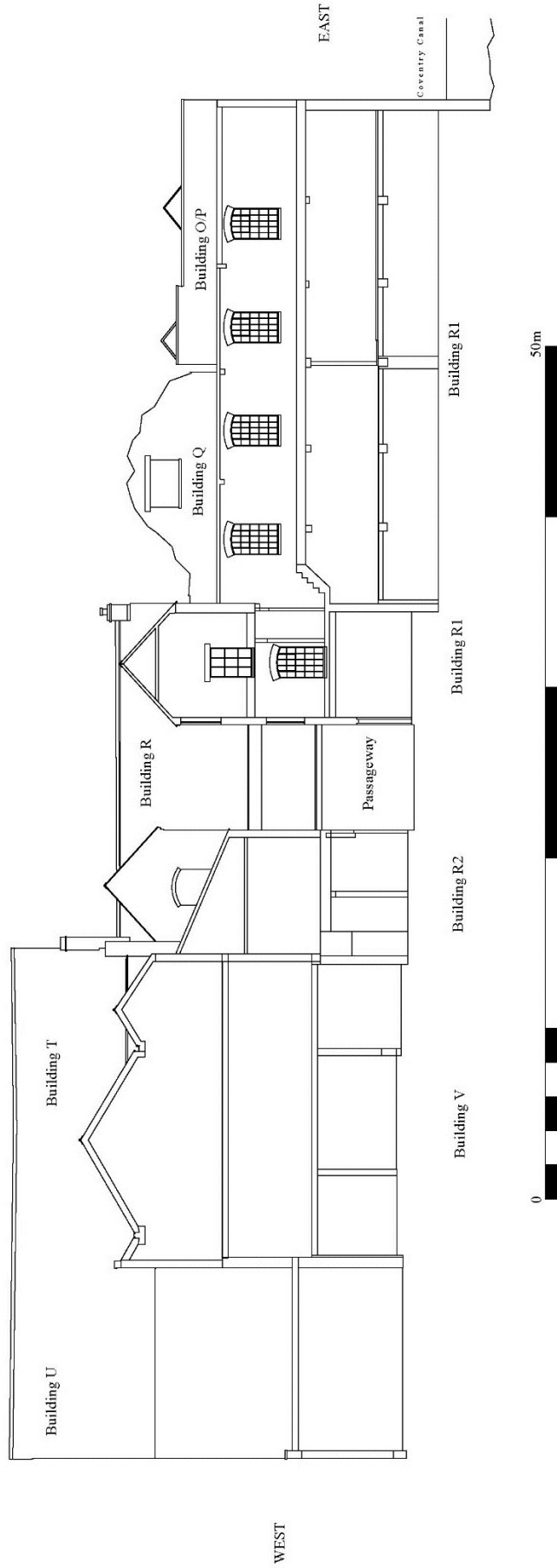
South-west facing elevation of Buildings T, R1 and F-L (northern end)



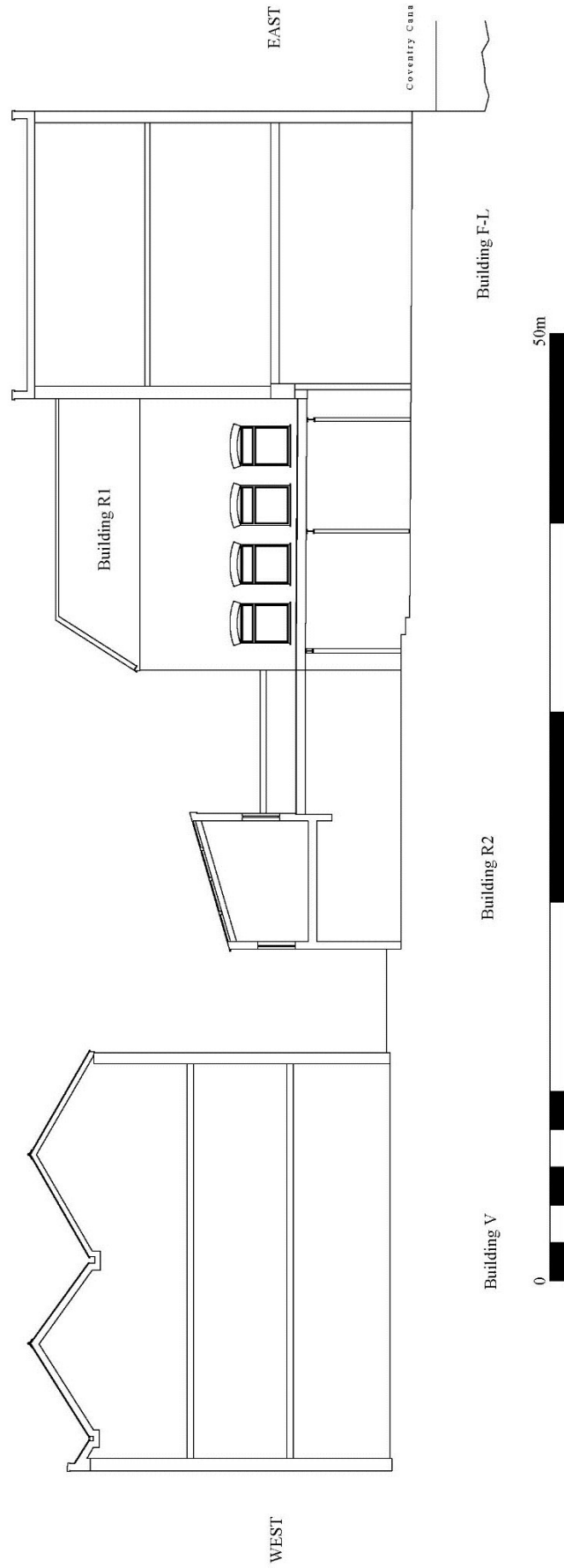
South-west facing elevation of Buildings F-L, E, C and A/B (southern end)



Section through buildings facing onto Coleshill Road



Section through buildings backing onto the Coleshill Road frontage



Section through Buildings V, R2 and F-L

Appendix 2 Notice found in the ground floor room of Building V

Issue 1 - (04.01.94)

WILSON & STAFFORD LTD WORK INSTRUCTION NO: 25

JOB	STEAMING (BY MACHINE)	SUPERVISOR	STEAMING
MACHINE TYPE	STEAMING MACHINE	TOOLS	RINGS & BLOCKS & RULER

PRE OPERATION

ITEM	DETAIL	FREQ
1	TAKE HOODS FROM CELLAR FOR NEXT TICKET	EACH BATCH
2	READ TICKET THOROUGHLY	EACH BATCH
3	COUNT HOODS INTO SIZE COLOURS & QUANTITIES	EACH BATCH
4	CHECK STEAMING BLOCKS ARE CORRECT SHAPE	EACH BATCH
5	CHECK RINGS ARE CORRECT SIZE	EACH BATCH
6	CHECK THE STEAM AND COOLING FAN ARE WORKING	EACH BATCH

OPERATIONS

NO	OPERATION
1	SET MACHINE UP FOR CORRECT SIZE OF HAT AND BRIM WIDTH
2	PLACE HOOD INTO GRIPS AND SWITCH ON STEAM
3	PULL OUT BRIM WIDTH REQUIRED AND LOCK MACHINE
4	PLACE CORRECT SIZE BLOCK INTO HOOD AND PRESS INTO CENTRE USING HANDLE PROVIDED
5	SWITCH OFF STEAM AND SWITCH ON BLOWER
6	ALLOW TO COOL
7	REMOVE HAT FROM MACHINE & CHECK BRIM WIDTH ON FIRST 1ST & 2ND HAT OF EACH SIZE
8	MARK SIZES AND PLACE IN PILE
9	SIGN TICKET AND SEND TO NEXT PROCESS

QUALITY CHECKS

1) ENSURE WORK TICKET IS WITH THE GOODS
2) CHECK STEAMED HOODS FOR ANY FAULTS

COMPLETED BY: *J. G. Alcock* CHECKED BY: *C. Hallis* DATE: *4/1/94*

Appendix 3 OASIS Information

PROJECT DETAILS	Oasis No	universi1-358998		
	Project Name	Level 3 Building Survey at the Britannia Works, Coleshill Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire		
	Start/end dates of field work	15-10-2018 - 18-10-2018		
	Previous/Future Work	Yes / Trial trenching		
	Project Type	Building survey		
	Site Status	Grade II listed		
	Current Land Use	Disused factory		
	Monument Type/Period	Factory/modern		
	Significant Finds/Period	None/none		
	Development Type	Residential		
	Reason for Investigation	NPPF		
	Position in the Planning Process	Planning condition		
	Planning Ref.	PAP/2015/0167 and PAP/2015/0168		
PROJECT LOCATION	Site Address/Postcode	Coleshill Road, Atherstone CV9 2AB		
	Study Area	0.4ha		
	Site Coordinates	SP 30646 97419		
	Height OD	95m OD		
PROJECT CREATORS	Organisation	ULAS		
	Project Brief Originator	Local Planning Authority		
	Project Design Originator	ULAS		
	Project Manager	R Buckley		
	Project Director/Supervisor	A Hyam		
	Sponsor/Funding Body	Developer / Hazleton Homes		
PROJECT ARCHIVE		Physical	Digital	Paper
	Recipient	NA		
	ID (Acc. No.)		Pending	Pending
	Contents		Photos	Field Notes
PROJECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	Type	Grey Literature (unpublished)		
	Title	Historic Building Survey at the Britannia Works, Coleshill Road, Atherstone, Warwickshire		
	Author	A Hyam		
	Other bibliographic details	ULAS Report No 2019-006		
	Date	2019		
	Publisher/Place	University of Leicester Archaeological Services / University of Leicester		
	Description	Developer Report A4 pdf		



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