

**A HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD
OF THE
FORMER FOREST LABORATORIES, BEXLEY, GREATER LONDON**

(NGR TQ 49699 73647)



**Commissioned by
CgMs and Linden Homes**

Report No. 2011292

A Historic Building Record
of the
Former Forest Laboratories, Weir Road, Bexley, Greater London, DA5 1NX

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CgMs

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2011 Archaeology South-East (a division of the UCL Centre for Applied Archaeology) carried out a historic building record of the former Forest Laboratories, Weir Road, Bexley, London, DA5 1NX (Fig. 1). The work was carried out in advance of development of the site.
- 1.2 Following the stipulations of a planning condition, the laboratory complex was subject to a programme of historic building recording carried out to English Heritage Level 2 standard as agreed following consultation with Mark Stevenson of the English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (EH GLAAS), Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Wandsworth.
- 1.3 The planning condition states:
- No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological recording of the standing historic building in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority.
- Reason: The historic building is of intrinsic archaeological interest and the demolition of the historic structure should be recorded before it is destroyed by the development hereby permitted.
- 1.4 On approval of the Written Scheme of Investigation created by CgMs (2011) as a result of the recording requirement, the site was visited by Jane Briscoe and Richard James on 24th November 2011 in order to create the historic building record. This report is the result of that record.

2.0 SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The recording action incorporated the survey of a large building complex comprising a number of structures of different construction dates to Level 2 standards as defined by English Heritage (2006).
- 2.2 The purpose of a Level 2 survey is to provide a descriptive record of a structure. The Level 2 survey involved gathering data on the exterior and interior of the structure which was then described and photographed. The descriptive element is intended to provide conclusions on the development and function of the building being surveyed. No comprehensive drawn record is required of a Level 2 record, but supplementary illustrations can be included if tailored to the wider scope of a project comprising several structures.
- 2.3 Subject to accessibility, a photographic record was made of the external and internal elevations and layout of the buildings. The photographic survey included general external and internal elevations and any surviving architectural detail, fixtures and fittings.

3.0 SITE LOCATION

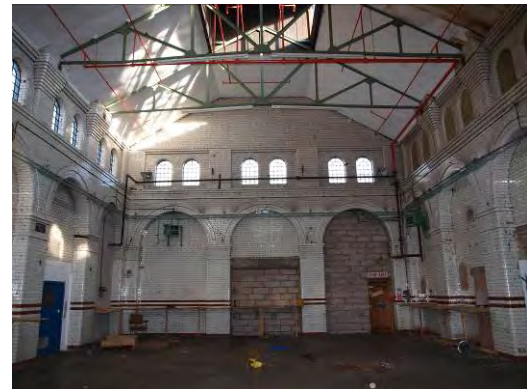
- 3.1 The site is the former Forest Laboratories, Weir Road, Bexley, London, DA5 1NX (Fig. 1; NGR TQ 49699 73647).

4.0 STATUTORY AND NON-STATUTORY DESIGNATIONS OF THE SITE

- 4.1 The site is surrounded on three sides by Old Bexley Conservation Area, which includes Weir Road, presently used as the access into the site, and the railway embankment to the south-east. No part of the building lies within the Conservation Area.
- 4.2 Land to the north, east and south of the site is Designated Metropolitan Green Belt. This overlaps with the Conservation Area but does not include any of the site or the adjacent railway. This is considered to be Heritage Land, forming the setting to the east of the site (CgMs 2011). No part of the site lies within the Designated Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 4.3 The north-eastern part of the present building is locally listed for its form and former function as a generating station. It was locally listed by the London Borough of Bexley, as “the building type is unusual (electricity generating station) and its design and use of building materials give the building local architectural and historic interest”. This structure is shown in the plates below:



Exterior view of the locally-listed part of the present building (Block A) facing south



Interior view of the locally-listed part of the present building (Block A) facing north-east

5.0 THE BUILDINGS

5.1 Summary of development of present structures (Fig. 2)

- 5.1.1 The present structure has been gradually enlarged over the last century. The first structure to be built on this site was a former electricity generating station (Block A) which was constructed between the railway line and the River Cray at a date between 1897 and 1909; it is said to date from 1903 (CgMs 2011a). This lies at the north-eastern end of the present building and was constructed in brick, glazed on the interior, with decorative details typical of its date of construction. It was shortly afterwards extended by the addition of a structure to the south-east (Block B), which appears to have fulfilled a similar function as it is constructed in the same style, though with plain interior brick and fewer decorative details.

- 5.1.2 Between 1909 and 1933 the two-structure complex was extended to the south-west with a long, narrow, two-storeyed structure positioned towards the south (Block C). At the same time additions were built against the north-east wall and also the south-east elevation. This structure is labelled on the 4th Edition Ordnance Survey map as 'St. Bernard Works (Cellophane)', which indicates the function of the building at this time.
- 5.1.3 By 1961 there had certainly been an extension to the south-east. Additional buildings had also been constructed: one very narrow range stretched towards the south-west from the south-west elevation of the building and a separate brick structure had been built to the north-west of the earliest part of the building (Block D). The function of this structure is not know: later in its life it was used as offices and archive storage. At this date the main building was labelled simply as 'Works', although it is not known whether this indicates a change of ownership or function or simply economy on the part of the cartographers.
- 5.1.4 By 1971, the complex had been greatly increased in footprint by further extensions to the south-west. The former, long range (Block C) had either been subsumed into the new work or had been truncated by it, as the new part of the building (Block E) is positioned further to the north-east than the former end of the earlier structure. This structure is brick-built and comprises three storeys with a flat roof. There was a return to more-specific labelling on the map of this date, as the building is annotated as 'Warehouse & Toy Factory'. A small structure on a different alignment had been built slightly removed from the south-western end of the warehouse: a wall separated the two buildings but they appear to be part of the same property.
- 5.1.5 By the present day, this separate structure had been demolished but the main building had had a small, irregular-plan, brick, concrete and glass-curtain-wall extension to the south-eastern end which houses offices and a reception (Block F). This was probably added when the building was converted to use as a pharmaceutical laboratory and manufacturing site owned by Forest Labs UK. Since the building became unoccupied, it was used as an 'Elite Battle Zone' for airsoft recreational activities. Most of the structure was undamaged by this most recent function but there has been some removal of parts of interior walls and glass.

5.2 Block A – Former electricity generating station (c.1903)

- 5.2.1 The former electricity generating station (Block A) was built as a large, single-room structure, open from the ground floor to the roof and standing the equivalent of two storeys high (Plate 1). It has a pitched roof with its long axis aligned NE-SW. Against the north-western side of the building is a single-storeyed outshut which for most of its length is flat-roofed. However, the north-eastern end of the lean-to has a sloping roof covered with corrugated sheet. Block B abuts the south-eastern side of the structure and Block C is positioned with its corner touching Block A's southern corner. A steel-framed loading area lies to the north-west of Block C and is supported at the north-eastern end by Block A's south-west wall. Inside, there is a single room in the large structure and two rooms in the outshut, the dividing wall positioned to form a lobby at the south-western end, serving the external doors.

Exterior

- 5.2.2 This building is distinctive for its dark-blue brickwork and semi-circular-arched windows. The bricks are only exposed at the quoins, around each window and at the stepped brick courses just below the eaves and continuing horizontally around

the gables. The remainder of the walls are rendered, the render left unpainted on the north-eastern and north-western elevations but painted white on the south-western wall. At a high level on each of the external walls there are small, semi-circular-headed windows with projecting cills and steel glazing bars. The bricks forming the jambs and arch are bull-nosed. The openings are arranged in pairs, there being three pairs of windows in each end wall and five in the side wall. There are two large windows at a lower level, one in the centre of the wall and one to the north-west: these are of a similar style to the smaller windows but incorporating projecting bosses at the top of the arch. A double-width, flat-headed door to the south-east has blue-brick jambs. In the wall above there is a projecting boss of the same brick which suggests this was of the same height as the adjacent windows and with a semi-circular arch. A semi-circular recess in the side wall suggests that there was a similar window in the side wall but that this has been infilled. The pitched roof is tiled and there is a large ridge-lantern which is hipped at both ends and is also tiled. The ridge-lantern has large-pane windows on each long side.

Interior

- 5.2.3 The whole interior of the main part of the structure is faced with off-white glazed bricks which reflect the light from the upper windows so well that little – if any – electric lighting is required (Plate 2). The interior walls are divided into two parts by two courses of stepped brickwork, the top course of which forms the cill of the upper windows. The lower part of the walls, proportionally approximately three-quarters of the full height of the side walls, is broken by tall semi-circular-headed recesses divided by bull-nosed piers with stepped brickwork forming a capital. In all walls but the south-western these recesses were nearly all originally infilled; the south-western recesses were windows and a door openings. At the base of the wall there is a single course of red-glazed brick and 13 courses above this there are two further courses of red-glazed brick, divided by a single course of plain glazed brick. This banding continues across the originally-closed recesses. It is discontinuous in the north-eastern recess to the north-western wall, where the brickwork is not glazed and is a pinky-grey in colour. This indicates that this recess was originally open, and the small section of lean-to roof over the outshut corresponding suggests that it was open to allow access via the outshut. A further, smaller area of disturbed brickwork in a recess can be seen in the top of the adjacent recess to the south-west. The bricks here, although glazed, are laid in header bond, rather than the Flemish bond in which the rest of the walls are laid. This corresponds with the recess in the external wall, suggesting that this was originally a semi-circular window. There were also earlier openings in the central and south-eastern recesses in the north-eastern wall, which have now been filled with breeze block. In the south-eastern wall, small, infilled semi-circular openings are positioned off-centre in each recess, that in the north-eastern end recess being slightly lower than the remainder. These openings do not appear to be windows, but as they are original, they are probably openings to allow pipework or cables to pass through the wall. Each of these small openings has been blocked.
- 5.2.4 The upper part of the walls is also recessed for each pair of small windows, these recesses also divided by bull-nosed piers. The short piers in the side walls incorporate a heavily-corbelled capital which also act as supports for the end of the four slender iron trusses. The end-wall piers are plain, the brickwork of the recesses stepping out in two courses to form a horizontal divide between the recess and the gable.

- 5.2.5 The roof trusses are of steel and are riveted together. They comprise tie-beams and sloping members acting as principle 'rafters'. These are strengthened and stiffened by five equally-spaced vertical struts with diagonal struts between each vertical. The remainder of the roof construction cannot be seen as it has been boarded. The trusses support a network of sprinkler pipes.
- 5.2.6 The double doors in the southern corner are of diagonally-set softwood planks fixed to a frame with mid-height horizontal ledges and struts between the ledges at top, middle and bottom. The lower part of the south-eastern leaf incorporates a small pedestrian door constructed with vertical planks. The doors are hinged at top and bottom and have brackets fixed just below the central ledge to bar the door. These are not original features. The wall above the door within the top of the recess is of yellow brickwork laid in stretcher bond.
- 5.2.7 The interior faces of the walls in the large room in the outshut are also of glazed bricks and the jambs of the windows are formed of bull-nosed bricks. The lower courses and mid-height two courses of red-glazed bricks are visible in fragmentary form on these walls, but only where the paint which covers the rest of the wall face has flaked off the glazed brick (Plate 3). By contrast, the smaller room at the south-western end of the outshut has plain, white-painted brick, except for the head and jambs of the double door which are in the blue brick which is visible on the exterior. There is a door blocked in breeze-block at the eastern corner of the larger room.
- 5.2.8 The roof over the main room is supported on steel 'I'-beams. The ceiling is plastered, and the side cheeks of the roof-light are also plastered. This roof-light is formed in two parts, with a lattice of concrete inset with square, glazed tiles. The windows are glazed with metal-framed casements and have bars on the interior. The doors at the south-western end are of softwood planks fixed onto a frame with a single diagonal strut on each leaf.

5.3 Block B – Extension to former electricity generating station (1903 x 1909)

- 5.3.1 This structure is built to the south-east of Block A, utilising the south-east wall of the adjacent building as its north-western wall. This building is larger in footprint than Block A, extending past Block A's north-eastern wall, but is lower and the roof has a shallower pitch. Like Block A it comprises a large room open to the roof. It has an enclosed staircase against the south-western wall and a lobby in the western corner at the foot of the stair with a cupboard above, housing electrical junction boxes.
- 5.3.2 Block B has extensions wrapping around the north-eastern, south-eastern and south-western walls (Blocks Ci and Cii), which hide much of its structure (Plate 4). There are doorways leading into the structure from the south-west (Block Cii), south-east and north-east (Block Ci), as well as the large doorway inserted to the north-west to access Block A. The lobby in the western corner leads to an external door in Block Cii.

Exterior

- 5.3.3 The exterior walls of this block share many features with the adjacent Block A. The building is gabled to north-east and south-west and the brickwork at the eaves of the gable, and horizontally across the base of the gable wall, are stepped outwards in blue brick. However, the external faces of the walls are not rendered but show plain, English-bonded, yellow-brown brickwork. The base of the walls incorporate a low plinth, capped with chamfered brick, and just below the eaves at the corners of

the structure, the horizontal courses of stepped brickwork return onto the side walls of the building for a short distance. The stepped brickwork can be seen in the adjoining blocks, and is especially visible in the north-eastern first-floor room in Block Cii (Plate 5).

- 5.3.4 One circular window is visible, positioned in the north-eastern gable wall. The jambs are formed in two courses of header bricks, incorporating projecting bosses at the four quarters. This window has been blocked on the interior face of the wall.

Interior

- 5.3.5 The interior of this building is plain (Plate 6). The north-east wall has five equally-spaced, chamfer-topped piers built against it, as too does the south-eastern wall, although the top of these have been removed to allow for glazing to be inserted along almost the full length of the side wall. The stair at the south-western end has concrete steps and incorporates an extended step at half-height. The walls to the rising part of the stair are of brick but are formed in breeze block at the extended step and at the top of the flight. Here a single-width door leads through the south-western wall into Block Cii. There is both an under-stairs cupboard and a cupboard formed above the lobby at the foot of the stairs, which must have only been accessible by ladder. This cupboard houses a number of electrical junction boxes. The floor is laid in concrete slab. The four steel roof trusses are similar to those in Block A, but unlike Block A the roof above has slender lateral boarding, interrupted in the north-west slope by plastic roof-lights. As in Block A, there are small-section pipes for a sprinkler system supported by the roof trusses. The doors in this block are of plain, painted plywood, some incorporating glazed upper panels.

5.4 Block C – St. Bernard Works (Cellophane) building (1909x1933)

- 5.4.1 Block C, incorporating the structures built during the years between 1909 and 1933, comprise two separate parts: Block Ci, a lean-to structure built against the north-eastern and south-eastern walls of Block B and Block Cii, a large building constructed to the south-west of the existing buildings, which housed the main part of the cellophane factory extant in 1933.
- 5.4.2 Block Ci is a single-storeyed lean-to which wraps around the eastern corner of the structure (Plate 4). The spaces inside are open to the sloping roof. The south-eastern part has a pair of small rooms at the south-western end but the remainder of the space is open. The north-western end of the north-eastern lean-to is separated off by a wall that extends up to the roof, and within this end part there are plasterboard partitions which divide the area into smaller office spaces. These office partitions stand to just above head height: they appear to be modern insertions. The two parts of the outshot were probably completely open when first built.
- 5.4.3 Block Cii is a rectangular, two-storeyed structure which extends from the south-western wall of Block 2 (Plate 7). Its northern corner kisses the south corner of Block A but there is no overlap. The ground floor of Block Cii comprises a large open space at the north-western side, divided from a corridor to the south-east with a temporary metal mesh partition and with a small room formed against the north-west wall which most recently functioned as a 'Label Store' (Plate 8). At the north-eastern end of this corridor is the door leading into Block B. Along the south-east wall are a series of small rooms accessed from a corridor which is separated from the main room to the north-west by a permanent wall (Plate 9). The first floor of this

block is laid out in larger rooms along its length, with some smaller spaces partitioned off along the exterior walls. At the south-western end there is a large room within which are individual rooms positioned in the centre of the space, accessed from narrow corridors along the external walls. There is no regular layout to the first-floor space, which suggests that the rooms have been added after construction, possibly in an *ad hoc* fashion.

Exterior

5.4.4 All of the Block C structures are constructed in the same materials. The walls are constructed in yellow-brown brickwork laid in English bond which has been left exposed to the north-east and south-east but has been rendered and painted white on the north-western elevation. The brickwork, however, is not the dominant feature, as all the walls incorporate large, small-pane, steel-framed windows, the largest of which have small, central-pivoting openings sections in the centre. The windows have projecting, sloping tile cills. The north-western elevation is weathered by a wide, corrugated-metal canopy supported on steel posts and trusses but this is of later construction than Block C, probably being of late-20th-century date. There are three pedestrian doors in this elevation at ground level: two are positioned in the centre of the wall, flanked by narrow windows on either side; the third is positioned adjacent to Block A. Between this and one of the central pedestrian doors, and at the south-western end, there is a wide loading door. Both are closed by folding metal shutters and are plain openings, which suggests that they have been inserted into this wall at a later date. There are five large windows at first-floor level. The north-eastern wall of Block Ci has six large windows along its length, separated by two-brick-wide piers. The small space between the heads of the windows and the eaves of the sloping roof is hidden by corrugated metal sheets bolted together. The upper part of the south-eastern wall also incorporates large windows: the use of glazing is such that in this wall it appears at first glance to be fully glazed with just a low sleeper wall beneath.

5.4.5 Although it is now only visible within Block E, the south-western wall of Block Cii originally had an elaborate central doorway, probably flanked by narrow windows at ground- and first-floor level (Plate 10). The head of this doorway is now all that survives above a later concrete lintel for a wide inserted loading door. This head, positioned high in the wall, has a segmental arch formed of chamfered bricks below plain bricks, with a tiled top, supported by piers on either side with projecting-brick capitals. The door itself originally had a segmental arch above the opening in the main wall. The cills of the first-floor windows survive in the wall on either side, but the openings have been blocked.

Interior

5.4.6 Block Ci has only a basic interior finish, which indicates that this was not considered to be a primary area. The walls are painted brickwork and have suffered some damage. The eastern corner of Block B, internalised within Block Ci, has been damaged and repaired with mortar infill. The two full-height partitions, one at the north-eastern end of the south-eastern part and one in the north-eastern part, have only the lower parts built in brick with the upper parts of plasterboard. The internal walls forming the offices at the north-western end of the north-eastern part of the block are also formed in plasterboard. These offices are ceiled and carpeted; the remainder of the floors are of plain concrete and the spaces are open to the roof. The roof is supported by steel 'I'-beams with the areas between hidden by plasterboard.

- 5.4.7 The walls in Block Cii are plastered internally and have few distinctive features. The width of the structure and the fact that not all the internal spaces may be created against an external wall means that there are a number of internal windows in partitions to borrow light from those areas which were lit by the external windows. This can be seen in both the ground-floor walls and the first-floor partitions. The specific recent function of some of the rooms against the south-eastern wall can be inferred from the special treatment of the wall covering: one room is tiled, indicating that it is likely to have been used as a shower, whereas the north-easternmost room has had its walls covered with sheets of polythene, taped together, perhaps to create a clean environment. The partitions which form these rooms are constructed in plasterboard, and instead of utilising the existing external wall, have a skin of plasterboard on the interior, including obscured-glass panels where the interior skin corresponds with an original window, so that the natural light is still allowed to enter the room. These measures suggest that the rooms were designed so that a specific environment could be created within the space. That these functioned as a working part of a laboratory is suggested by the incorporation of various plugs and vents into the walls, as well as the equipment which has been left within some of the rooms (Plate 11). Above each plywood door is a louvred vent and each door incorporates a large, square glazed panel, which allowed for observation of what was being carried out in each room. Low storage cupboards are positioned opposite the doorways, against the corridor wall (Plate 9). At the end of the row of small laboratories, the corridor bends to the right by 90 degrees, leading to an external doorway in the south-eastern wall.
- 5.4.8 The metal mesh partition which separates off the ground-floor packaging area from the corridor leading between Blocks E and B is covered with cardboard, and is built against a row of concrete columns which help to support the first floor. These posts correspond with square-section concrete ribs in the ceiling, which are also part of the first-floor construction. The number of posts and ribs and their substantial nature suggest that the first floor was originally designed to carry a great deal of weight, perhaps the original factory machinery.
- 5.4.9 The ground floor is covered with hard-wearing vinyl which seems to have been employed in order to provide a low-friction surface for moving wheeled vehicles around the space. The ceiling over the laboratories and corresponding corridor has had a suspended ceiling inserted, complete with recessed electric lights; there are sprinkler heads positioned at intervals in the suspended ceiling, and the pipes for these continue into the exposed-ceiling rooms to the north-west.
- 5.4.10 The majority of the inner faces of the first-floor walls in Block Cii have been retained as painted brick onto which pipes and radiators have been fixed. The partition walls of the small internal rooms are of plasterboard, with plain, wooden surrounds to the numerous borrowed lights and plain wooden skirting boards and headplates. The partitions do not extend into the roof, but terminate approximately below the steel roof trusses. There is one exception to this: a brick-built wall separates the north-eastern end room from the remainder of the first-floor part of Block Cii. At this point, there is also a step in floor level, which has necessitated the incorporation of a small flight of metal steps at the doorway in the south-eastern end of the wall.
- 5.4.11 As on the ground floor, the doors at first-floor level are of plywood and most incorporate glazed upper panels, which gives them a late-20th-century appearance. The inner partitions also appear to be of this date. That at least some of them date from the laboratory phase of the complex is indicated by the rooms functions: one is

named 'Blister Room' and one 'Tablet Room'. The north-eastern room was part of the Packaging Department, but in none of these rooms do any pieces of equipment survive which may give more indication of function.

- 5.4.12 The roof is supported by regularly-spaced steel trusses which are stiffened by diagonal struts rather than by vertical and diagonal struts. The skeelings in between the trusses at the north-eastern end are boarded over, but parts of removed panels indicate that the roof is covered on the exterior by corrugated sheeting, probably asbestos. At the south-western end of the block the roof is hidden by a suspended ceiling, although in these areas as in the rooms open to the roof, the floor was covered with vinyl.

5.5 Block D – Office/archive storage building (1933x1961)

- 5.5.1 This is a separate structure laid out over two storeys in a long rectangle with an off-centre entrance projection to the south-east (Plate 12). It has been extended at the north-eastern end with a plain turret-like structure. To the north-east of the main entrance there is a corridor against the south-eastern wall with the rooms extending to the rear wall. There is a stair just to the south-west of the main door and a second stair against the south-west end wall, with a room between the two. On the first floor the corridor to the north-east is positioned at the rear of the structure, with the rooms on the south-eastern side.

Exterior

- 5.5.2 The structure is constructed in rough-textured brown brick laid in Flemish bond. The walls are divided into three sections by broad horizontal concrete bands which act as lintels for the windows and doors. There are two courses of projecting bricks at the bottom of the windows which are continuous across the full length of the main part of the structure. There has been much alteration to the fenestration: a number of the windows have been blocked in pink-brown brick, including the window in the projecting entrance. All of the first-floor windows to the north-east of the entrance projection have been blocked.
- 5.5.3 The door in the projection has a plain concrete architrave with an entablature above its head. The door in the opening is double-leaved, with reinforced obscured glass in the upper panels and plain recessed lower panels. The windows in the surviving openings are timber-framed and many were fixed. The rough-textured, pink-brown brick turret at the north-eastern end has no windows, but incorporates a door in the front wall. There is a vent adjacent above a small opening, perhaps the base of a chute. The whole structure is flat-roofed and the projecting entrance rises slightly above the rest of the wall.

Interior

- 5.5.4 The walls on this interior of the building are plastered and painted, as are the ceilings. Both the ground and first floors are laid with tiles, although the stairs are plain and of pre-formed concrete. Shuttered concrete has also been used in the flat roof and to form roof-lights inset with square glazed bricks in the end rooms (Plate 13); that in the south-west end room has been blocked. The first-floor room in the north-eastern turret has exposed brick on the interior face of the wall, the bricks being of a more varicoloured, smoother type; this turret also has a flat concrete roof and first floor, and houses large pieces of machinery (Plate 14).

5.5.5 The interior doors are plain board doors with aluminium handles. The architraves are of narrow, plain timber, and the skirting boards, where visible, are also plain. There has been little decoration employed anywhere in this building. It appears to have always had a more industrial function, as there are a number of vents and chutes incorporated into the walls, even in rooms which recently held only company archives. It was, however, fitted out to be used as a self-contained building as there is a kitchen at the south-west end and a WC leading from the ground-floor corridor.

5.6 Block E – Warehouse and toy factory (1961x1971)

5.6.1 Block E is the largest part of the complex, and unlike the earlier structures, was built over three storeys, with a two-storeyed section extending to the north-west and south-west from the western corner of Block Cii (Plate 15). The three-storeyed structure lies further to the south-east and its south-eastern wall continuing the line of the earlier structure to the north-east. The two-storeyed structure may pre-date slightly the larger block to the south-west, but they were both built within a 10-year period. The difference in appearance may result from aesthetic design rather than a difference in construction date.

5.6.2 The main part of the ground floor and the central part of the first and second floors comprised a single open space. There are smaller rooms divided off at the northern corner and the south-western end of the ground-floor where the block projects in a small structure to the south-west and offices or laboratories around the external walls of the upper floors, taking advantage of the large windows. A stair rises in the southern corner, and another in the northern corner. In the approximate centre of the north-eastern wall there is an elevator and there are large loading doors in the south-east walls in the first and second floors and in the north-western wall on the second floor. Small rooms are divided off in the centre of the first- and second-floor open areas.

Exterior

5.6.3 The northern, two-storeyed part of Block E is constructed in brick displaying three construction lifts: the lowest is of pale, yellow-brown brick laid in English bond; the middle is of slightly-darker red-brown brick; the upper lift is of darker brick yet, and both the middle and upper parts are laid in stretcher bond. There are two entrances to this part of the block, both constructed in the same decorative manner, utilising relief tiles of white, brown and purple. The doors, that in the north-eastern wall being narrower than that in the north-western wall, lead into the ground floor and are weathered by deep, flat hoods. The tiles rise above, respecting the width of the door, with a window set into the tiles at first-floor level.

5.6.4 The windows in the north-east elevation are small, single-glazed windows, all with obscured glass. They are positioned with the first-floor windows directly above the ground-floor openings (Plate 16). The openings in the north-west elevation are larger, each windows having a small upper casement and a larger, lower one, hinged in the centre. All the windows have narrow, plain lintels and slightly-projecting tile cills. The roof of this part of the structure is flat and bounded by railings.

5.6.5 The three-storeyed part of Block E is characterised by almost-continuous glazing. The lower parts of the walls are built in brick laid in stretcher bond, of a yellow-brown colour, and at the level of first and second floors and at the top of the walls there are broad white bands of concrete. In between the brick and concrete are

steel-framed windows. There is a continuous band of high windows with deeper windows at intervals, except in the north-eastern elevation, where there are only the high windows (Plate 16). The fenestration is only broken for doorways and where structures abut the block. Concrete pillars break the fenestration at intervals: these rise through the building to exit above the flat roof, supporting railings.

- 5.6.6 There is a wide loading door in the north-west elevation, weathered by a deep, flat hood. Most recently, this formed the 'Goods Outwards' door, the 'Goods Inwards' being that in the north-west elevation of Block Cii. There is a second ground-floor door in the south-eastern elevation.
- 5.6.7 Above the roof at the north-eastern end rise two brick structures, one of small, square footprint with the appearance of a chimney and the other large, rising from the flat roof, with a taller section to the north-west. Part of this second structure is the top of the elevator shaft, but it is likely that there is a room in the north-eastern section, as there is a window lighting the interior in the north-eastern wall. However, no access was found to the roof.
- 5.6.8 At the south-eastern end of the south-western wall a small two-storeyed structure projects to the south-west. This houses two rooms on the ground floor and a corridor between Blocks E and F on the first floor. The walls of both sections have low brick walls and glazing above.

Interior

- 5.6.9 The open space on the ground floor has a series of square-section concrete pillars at intervals, which form part of the support for the first floor (Plate 17). In a similar manner to Block Cii, the pillars support concrete ribbing to the first floor. A network of pipes are suspended from the plastered and featureless ceiling. The floor is laid in concrete slab. In the northern corner, brick partitions separate this space from the two-storeyed structure at the north-eastern end.
- 5.6.10 The stairs in the southern corner are of dog-leg form with a half landing between the two floors. The steps are of concrete and the flights have plain, metal stick balusters and a flat metal handrail. The walls of the stairwell are formed in brick laid in English bond with a broad band of concrete at the level of the first floor. The rooms to the south-eastern of the stair are fitted out more comfortably, with diagonally-set laminate flooring, wallpaper on the walls and suspended ceilings. The partitions forming these rooms are constructed in breeze-block.
- 5.6.11 Throughout the first floor, except in the offices against the north-western and north-eastern walls and the corridor which leads to the offices, the floor is covered with vinyl. The offices and corridor are carpeted. Over the offices and large open space in the centre of the block there are suspended ceilings: this is presumably to hide the large metal air ducts and pipework which serve the main space.
- 5.6.12 The main open space, as on the ground floor, is interrupted with concrete pillars. There are also residual freestanding partitions in the centre of the floor, which were formerly small rooms, lit by borrowed lights (Plate 18). These partitions were formed with plasterboard fixed to a frame of metal studs, which rise to the suspended ceiling. The glass in the windows is safety glass, which suggests that these were used as small laboratories. There are further laboratories in the eastern corner of the storey, fitted out with low cupboards and work surfaces. Unlike the main space, these are well lit, having natural light from the external windows. The

internal partitions on this floor are plastered, hiding their construction details from view, but they do not appear to be substantial brick walls. The wall separating the main space from the corridor leading to the offices is, however, of brick. There are also brick walls dividing the stair wells from the rest of the space.

- 5.6.13 The open space on the second floor has been interrupted by a number of plasterboard partitions to create a smaller laboratory space. Most of the internal fittings in these rooms have been removed, but one room, almost in the centre of the block, still retains its vents and pipes which indicate that the space probably contained fume hoods. As with the other floors, the internal partitions incorporate a number of large, plain borrowed lights which allow the natural light to filter into the enclosed internal spaces. There do not appear to be any fixtures or fittings in this block which do not date from the building's most recent use as a pharmaceutical laboratory. In the northern corner, just to the south-west of the stairwell, there are two typical laboratories fitted with mid-late-20th-century lab furniture: wooden cupboards and melamine bench tops with fixed gas taps (Plate 19). The larger of these rooms was the Q.C [Quality Control] Laboratory, with a smaller Development Laboratory to the north-east, served by a Development Store between this room and the stairwell. The brick-built elevator shaft juts into the space against the north-eastern wall.
- 5.6.14 As on the first floor, the second floor has suspended ceilings and a vinyl covering to the floor.

5.7 Block F – Forest Laboratories reception and offices (1971x2011)

- 5.7.1 Block F is a small, three-storeyed, flat-roofed extension to Block E at the south-western end, designed to house dedicated office space (Plate 20). It has a recessed entrance, angled at 45 degrees. The first-floor is jettied out over the ground floor to the south-west and the north west, but as the first floor over the entrance forms a balcony, the first- and second-floor parts of the building are notched back in the corner. The second floor, in turn is jettied out over the first floor at the north-west end of the north-east wall, but is stepped back from the first floor on the south-eastern side. The smaller ground-floor area comprises a, entrance lobby at the north-west end, leading to a central NW-SE corridor which has offices on either side. There are stairs at each end of the block. The first and second floors have a large open-plan office at the centre of the block to the north-east, with small, enclosed offices on the other three sides. A large office lies at the north-western end of the first floor. Outside this office is a small ante-room, with a second, smaller office leading from this. The large office has a built-in cupboard and WC and also has private access to the balcony, suggesting that this was the director's office, with space for a secretary in the ante-room and a personal assistant in the smaller adjacent office.

Exterior

- 5.7.2 This structure is similar to Block E in its use of continuous glazing around its elevations, but in this block the brickwork is even more reduced, resulting in the glazed panels acting as curtain walls with a concrete and steel frame supporting the structure internally. The brick is varicoloured pink-yellow-brown and is laid in stretcher bond, with a pale concrete band projecting from the elevation at each floor level and above the second floor at roof level. The glazed panels are laid out in threes separated by a louvred section, although at first-floor level on the north-east elevation, there is only one glazed panel between each louvre. The recessed

ground floor has fully-glazed external walls. The jettied first floor is supported on NE-SW-aligned concrete beams which rest on regularly-spaced, square-section concrete pillars.

- 5.7.3 Above the first-floor and second-floor windows in the north-east elevation there is a glazed sloping roof, as the walls for the second-floor and roof respectively are stepped back from the floor below. This will increase the amount of light entering the rooms in this area as the windows will be partially shaded by the adjacent Block E. However, as Block F has been built against the south-west projecting part of Block E, an external light-well has been formed, which allows windows to be incorporated in the north-east wall construction. The projecting part of Block E forms one method of access between Blocks E and F, and a second linking corridor suspended above the light-well entrance allows further access, although at first-floor level only.

Interior

- 5.7.4 This block has plastered walls and suspended ceilings to hide shuttered-concrete floor construction. The floors are laid with carpet. The shuttered-concrete pillars and girders which form the main frame of the building have been constructed to retain the prominent graining of the wood against which the concrete was formed, as a decorative element. The ground-floor partition separating the offices from the corridor have large, obscured-glass borrowed lights; the board doors also have large, glazed upper panels, to make the most of the natural light. There are also light fittings in the ceiling.
- 5.7.5 The dog-leg stairs in the northern corner are formed in the same wood-grain-effect concrete, with carpeted and metal-tipped steps and half-landings. The plain, metal balusters have wooden grip handrails. At the south-eastern end of the block the stairs are formed within a breeze-block stairwell with a wood-grain-effect concrete central pier to which the wooden grip handrail is fixed on metal brackets. The upper flight of these stairs has been blocked.
- 5.7.6 On the first and second floors the internal partitions do not incorporate any borrowed lights, as each office has its own external windows. The doors are plain board, with narrow glazed sections near the handle. Above each door is a panel of plywood which visually breaks up the partitions. The architraves are timber and plain.
- 5.7.8 The first-floor open-plan office has a cruciform, half-height partition formed of studwork and plasterboard with a flat timber top (Plate 21). There are no other fittings or fixtures in the enclosed offices. The large director's office has timber veneered sliding doors forming a closet against the south-eastern wall; there is an orange-tiled WC in the northern corner accessed via a small changing room against the north-east wall. These small spaces are not naturally lit.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The present structure is the result of a series of building schemes, each designed to extend and enlarge the earlier structures to allow for more specific functions to be fulfilled.
- 6.2 The earliest structure on the site is the former electricity generating station (Block A) at the north-eastern end, which was built as a freestanding structure but was very

quickly added to by the construction of the similar structure to the south-east (Block B), which is likely to have been in use as part of the same function.

- 6.3 When the structure was converted to use as a cellophane factory it was extended to the south-west by the addition of a two-storeyed structure, accessed via the stair in Block B. It probably comprised an open space on the first floor and an open space on the north-western side of the ground floor, with small rooms with specific functions to the south-east.
- 6.4 In the mid-20th century a separate structure was built to the north-west, housing small rooms which seemed to have been designed for a specific function, but which has been much altered in the subsequent years. Shortly afterwards, the main building was again extended by the construction of a large three-storeyed range. This also comprised a number of large, open spaces on each floor, which seems to have been subdivided as part of the most recent use of the site. The incorporation of open areas correlates well with the use of the building as a 'Works' or factory, in which there was probably extensive machinery requiring space to fit and further space to work around. This machinery has since been removed.
- 6.5 The structure today bears little evidence for its former use, having been completely refitted in order to function as a pharmaceutical laboratory. The ground floors of Blocks Cii and E were used as packaging and loading spaces, whereas the first and second floors were used as laboratory space. The offices were housed in the most recent, purposed-built Block F, with the earliest structures seeming to fulfil storage functions.

7.0 BIBLIOGRAPHY/SOURCES CONSULTED

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8.0 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE

- 8.1 The site archive will be deposited with the London Archaeology Archive Resource Centre (LAARC) under the Museum of London site code FLB11 and to LAARC standards. The archive will comprise a hard copy of the full report, a pdf version of the report on CD, the full photographic record with registers, hard copies of the drawn record and field notes.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 The author would like to thank Suzanne Gailey of CgMs Consulting for commissioning the work on behalf of Linden Homes. Thanks also to Pre-Construct Archaeology for on-site hospitality.

APPENDIX 1: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: ARCHAEO6-115565

Project details

Project name	Former Forest Laboratories, Bexley, Greater London
Short description of the project	Archaeology South-East (a division of the UCL Centre for Applied Archaeology) carried out a historic building record of the former Forest Laboratories, Bexley, Greater London, in advance of re-development of the site. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting and the site survey was undertaken in November 2011. The earliest building on the site is the locally-listed former electricity generating station, build c. 1903, and extended in various construction schemes throughout the 20th century in order to suit the changing functions of the site. It has been a generating station, a cellophane factory, a toy factory and, most recently, a pharmaceutical laboratory. The present building is positioned upon a NE-SW alignment, abutting a railway line to the south-east.
Project dates	Start: 24-11-2011 End: 09-12-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	5233 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	FLB11 - Sitecode
Type of project	Building Recording
Site status (other)	Locally-listed building
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	PHARMACEUTICAL WORKS Modern
Monument type	ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION SITE Modern
Monument type	TOY FACTORY Modern
Significant Finds	ARCHITECTURE Modern
Methods & techniques	'Photographic Survey','Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure'
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BEXLEY BEXLEY Former Forest Laboratories
Postcode	DA5 1NX
Study area	1.00 Hectares

Site coordinates TQ 49699 73647 51.4414903536 0.154214870173 51 26 29 N 000 09
15 E Point

[Project creators](#)

Name of Organisation Archaeology South-East

Project brief originator CgMs Consulting

Project design originator CgMs Consulting

Project director/manager Ron Humphrey

Project supervisor Jane Briscoe

Type of sponsor/funding body Client

[Project archives](#)

Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents 'Survey'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Text'

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Contents 'Survey'

Paper Media available 'Photograph','Report'

[Project bibliography 1](#)

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Historic Building Record of the former Forest Laboratories, Bexley, Greater London

Author(s)/Editor(s) Briscoe, J.

Other bibliographic details 2011292

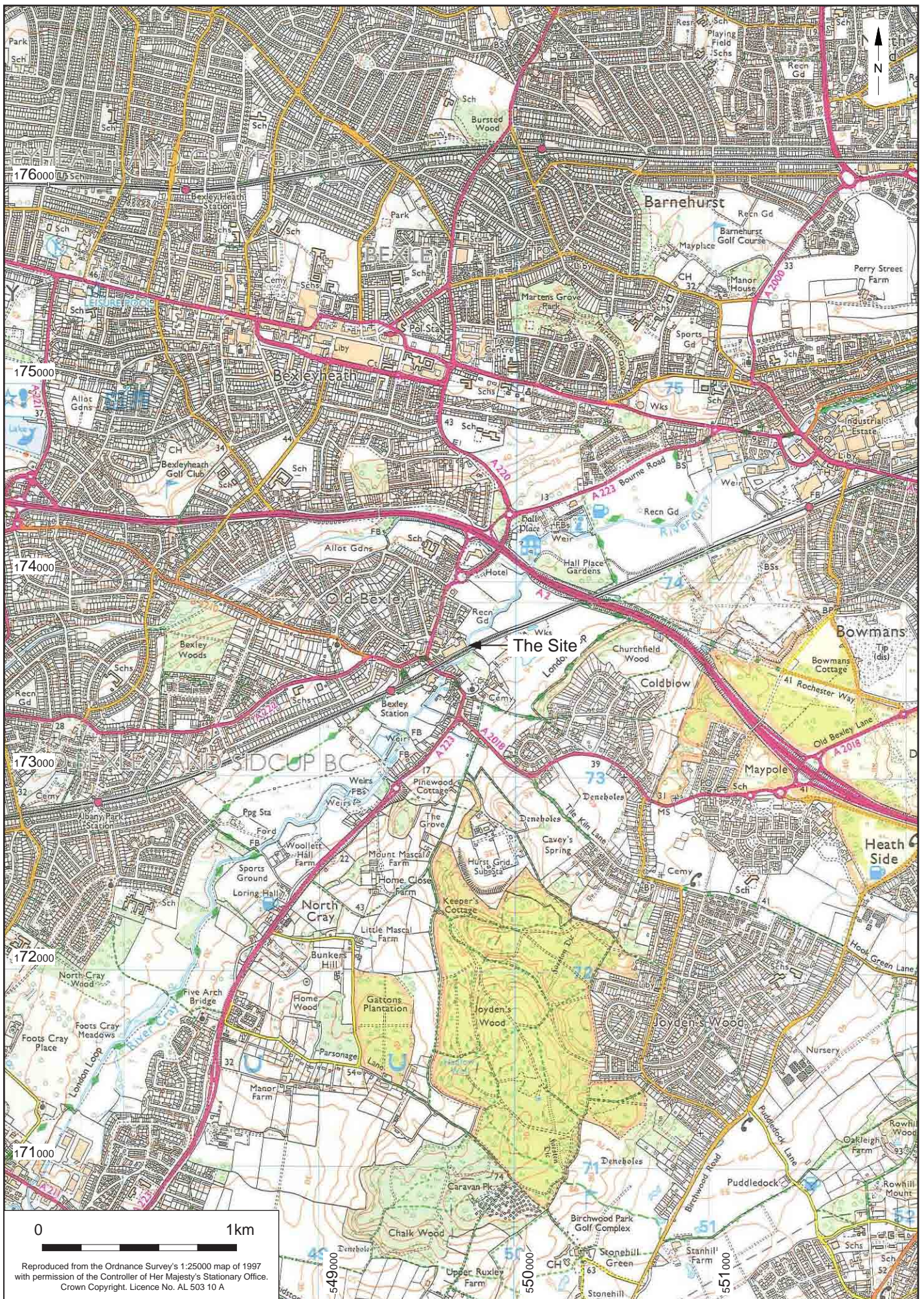
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© Archaeology South-East		Former Forest Laboratories, Bexley, Greater London		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 5223	Dec 2011	Site location		
Report Ref: 2011292	Drawn by: JFB			



© Archaeology South-East		Former Forest Laboratories, Bexley, Greater London	
Project Ref: 5223	Dec 2011	Site Plan	
Report Ref: 2011292	Drawn by: JFB		

Fig. 2



Plate 1

Block A from the north

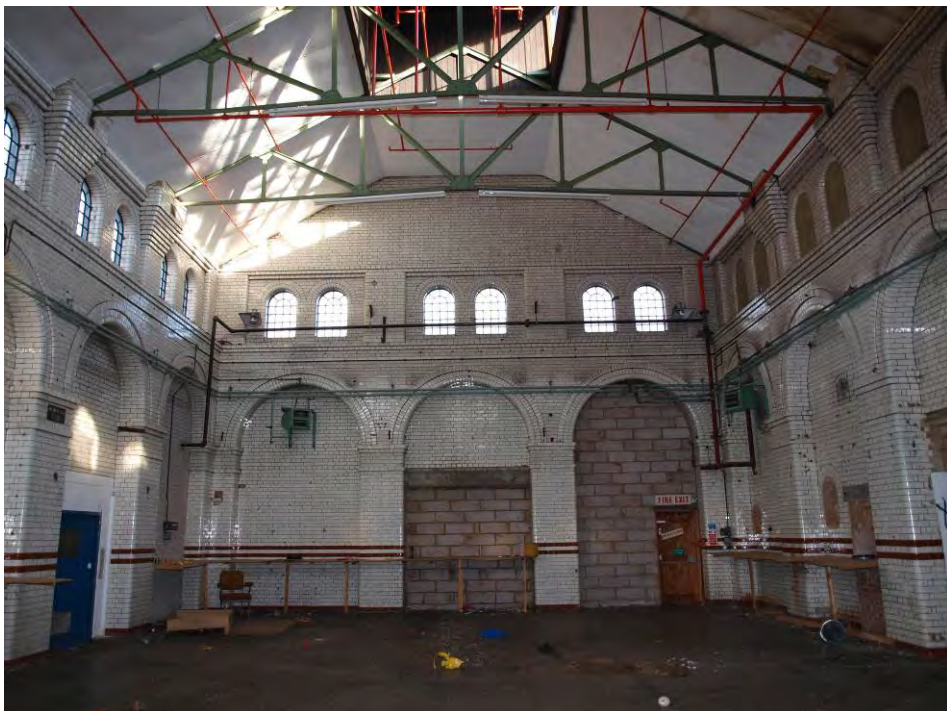


Plate 2

Interior of Block A from the south-west



Plate 3

Outshot to Block A from the north-east. The red-brick banding can be seen to the left



Plate 4

Block B from the north with Block Ci lean-to against the north-east wall



Plate 5

The stepped courses at the base of the gable of Block B, within the north-eastern room of Block Cii. Photo from south-east



Plate 6

Interior of Block B from south



Plate 7

Block Cii from the west showing Block A to the left



Plate 8

'Label Store' on ground floor of Block Cii, from south-west



Plate 9

Small rooms to south-east of Block Cii from south-west



Plate 10

Former south-western doorway of Block Cii, now blocked and visible only in Block E. Photo from west.



Plate 11

Equipment left in one of the small rooms in Block Cii



Plate 12

Block D from the south



Plate 13

Concrete roof light in the end room of Block D



Plate 14

Machinery in the north-eastern turret to Block D



Plate 15

Block E from the west



Plate 16

Block E from the north showing the two-storeyed section with decorative entrances



Plate 17

Ground-floor open space of Block E from north-west



Plate 18

First-floor open space of Block E from the north-west showing inserted partitions to the left



Plate 19

The Q.C. Laboratory (Block E, second floor) from the south



Plate 20

North-west elevation of Block F from west



Plate 21

First-floor open-plan office in Block F from the west

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