

The Assembly Hall,  
Wellcroft Street,  
Wednesbury

Historic Building Recording  
and Archaeological  
Evaluation

Checked by

Supervisor..... date.....

Project Manager..... date.....

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**THE ASSEMBLY HALL, WELLCROFT STREET, WEDNESBURY**  
**Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Evaluation**

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for

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## THE ASSEMBLY HALL, WELLCROFT STREET, WEDNESBURY

### Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Evaluation

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## **SUMMARY**

*This report describes the results of a programme of archaeological work undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology at the site of the Assembly Hall in Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury, in March 2007. Work consisted of both historic building recording and the excavation of an archaeological evaluation trench in the yard just to the east of the Assembly Hall buildings. The study area lies within the medieval core of the medieval town and just outside the supposed ramparts of a possible Iron Age hillfort.*

*Building recording revealed that the standing building essentially represents a two-phase structure, originating with a single range, gabled hall erected in 1857 by the Christian Brethren as a non-conformist assembly hall, substantially enlarged at some point between 1919 and 1936 with the addition of a second gabled range to the east.*

*In the evaluation trench, modern make-up deposits were encountered to a depth of 2.00m, with some indication that ground reduction took place prior to the building up of ground levels. Natural clay was encountered directly below 19<sup>th</sup> century deposits. Cut into the natural clay in the northern part of the trench was a large feature, thought to be a ditch running southwest to northeast, filled with a homogenous reddish brown silty clay. The ditch was up to 1.00m deep and at least 2.20m wide, with the location of the northwestern side and therefore the full extent of the ditch not established. The base of the ditch was 3.00m down from the present ground surface. No dateable finds were recovered from the ditch fill.*

## THE ASSEMBLY HALL, WELLCROFT STREET, WEDNESBURY

### Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Evaluation

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of a programme of archaeological works carried out by Birmingham Archaeology at the site of the Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury during the week 19<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007.

A planning application (DC/04/42750) for development of the site was approved subject to conditions in July 2004. In accordance with the Department of the Environment *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*, a brief for a programme of archaeological work was written by the Assistant Archaeologist for Sandwell MBC (Sandwell MBC 2007) and Birmingham Archaeology was contracted to carry out the project. The Written Scheme of Investigation for the work (Birmingham Archaeology 2007) was approved by Sandwell MBC in advance of implementation.

#### 2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

##### 2.1 Location and geology

The study area is situated on the northwest side of Wellcroft Street within the northwestern part of the historic core of Wednesbury (Figures 1 and 2). It is centred at NGR SO 9857 9534, within a designated "Area of Archaeological Importance". The land slopes down gently towards the west from the top of Church Hill where St Barthomelew's Church stands just 150m to the east. The buildings of the Assembly Hall occupy the larger (southwestern) part of a rectangular block of land measuring approximately 28m x 20m. This includes a yard area measuring about 20m x 9m to the northeast of the buildings. It was in this yard that the evaluation trench was located.

Wednesbury lies on the Upper Coal Measure overlain by boulder clays.

##### 2.2 Archaeological and Historical background

Wednesbury is mentioned in the Domesday book as a substantial settlement, and its origins as an urban centre lie in the Anglo-Saxon period. The placename 'Wednesbury' has been taken to mean 'Woden's burh', implying the existence of earthworks in Saxon times. The entry in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 592 states that Ceawlin was driven out of "Woddes beorge" following a battle. In 715 the Chronicles mention another conflict at "Woddesbeorge", and in 915 it is stated that the burh of "Weardbyrig" was fortified by Ethelfleda, daughter of Alfred the Great. Supposed traces of ramparts and scarping on Church Hill have traditionally been ascribed to Ethelfleda. However, no artefacts or features from the Saxon period have been found to verify the documentary evidence.

Others have argued that there was a pre-existing Iron Age hillfort on this location – with its possible ramparts identified by antiquaries such as Hackwood (1902). A western rampart was thought to run roughly along the present course of Ethelfleda Terrace, with an outer rampart following the line of Manor House Road to the north. If correct, this would place the study area between inner and outer ramparts. An archaeological evaluation carried out in 1990 (Buteux

1990) cast doubt on this theory, however. Two trenches were excavated to a depth of 3m: one through the earthwork banks to the west of Ethelfleda Terrace and the other on Church Hill. The supposed earthwork and terraced ground at these points were shown to be modern in origin (SMR MBL 2636/3039/5020).

St Bartholemew's Church stands 130m to the east of the study area. The earliest surviving parts of the church date to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, but it is likely to have replaced an earlier church building on the same site (SMR MBL 2496). It is sometimes argued that the original settlement of Wednesbury was focused around the church, shifting further south to the area of the market place in the medieval period.

The late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Roman Catholic church of St Mary's is situated about 100m to the northeast of the study area (SMR MBL3057).

The principal manor house was located on the north side of the church at Hall End on what is now Manor House Road, about 300m to the northeast of the study area, and is thought to have been surrounded by open fields (Hodder 1990-1). A subsidiary manor known as Oakeswell Hall stood roughly where Walsall Street is now, about 500m to the southeast of the study area. First mentioned in 1421, it was demolished in the 1960s. Excavations here revealed floor and yard surfaces dated by pottery to the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as later features (Hodder and Glazebrook 1985-6). The study area is likely to have been part of manorial land in late medieval times (SMR MBL2714).

Recent excavations on land by Camp Lane in 2006/2007 have revealed a large ditch running north south along the line of the town's western boundary. The ditch fill contained huge quantities of pottery wasters and spoolers from a nearby kiln, dated to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Other excavations of post-medieval pottery production in Wednesbury are described by Hodder (1990-91).

A more detailed account of the archaeology and history of Wednesbury town centre can be found in a recent archaeological impact assessment (Lobb 2006).

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **3.1 Historic Building Recording**

The aims of the programme of historic building recording, as defined by the project brief, were as follows:

- To establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the Assembly Hall.
- To make a detailed record of the site in accordance with current best practice. The record will consider its historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology and function.
- To create a detailed site archive and deposit with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

### 3.2 Trial Trench Evaluation

The broad objective of the evaluation was to locate and identify any surviving remains within the constraint area in order to assess the extent, date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits.

Site specific objectives were as follows:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To provide further insight on the origins and development of Wednesbury
- To contribute to the existing corpus of academic knowledge.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

## 4 METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Documentary Research

Prior to the commencement of on-site works, the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record was consulted and a search carried out for all known sites within a radius of 500m of the Assembly Hall.

Archival research included consultation of appropriate secondary sources pertinent to the study area located at The Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library and at the local history section of the Wednesbury Library.

A full map regression exercise was undertaken to define the development of buildings on the Wellcroft Street site. Maps consulted included:

- Kempson and Robins' *Plan and Survey of the Parish of Wednesbury* of 1799
- *Tithe Rentcharge map of the Parish of Wednesbury* of December 1846.
- Fereday's *Health of Towns Act Plan of Wednesbury* (Sheet 8) of 1853
- Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition 6" map of 1890.
- Ordnance Survey 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 6" map of 1903.
- Ordnance Survey map of 1919.
- Ordnance Survey map of 1938.

A search was made of the Smethwick Library Photographic Archive for relevant images of the development site. Only two images of Wellcroft Street were identified (refs. 8099 and 8178) and only the second of these (dated 1960) shows the Assembly Room building itself. Together with a further photograph from 1936, reproduced in a publication '*Wednesbury Memories*' (Bott 2004, 21), these images help to put the Assembly Room in its historical context, which has been lost in its entirety to urban renewal over the last 40 years.



## 4.2 Historic Building Recording

### *Measured Survey*

The survey comprised the generation of a hand-measured ground plan and representative longitudinal and transverse cross-sections of the standing buildings.

### *Photographic Survey*

A general and detailed photographic survey was undertaken including both black and white negative, using 35mm SLR camera, and colour digital coverage. Photographs were recorded on *pro-forma* register sheets including relevant information pertaining to location, orientation, details of scales used, etc. as appropriate.

### *Written Record*

A written description of the building was made using *pro-forma* building and room recording sheets and included both exterior elevations and interior descriptions on a systematic room-by-room basis.

## 4.3 Trial Trench Evaluation

A single trench (Trench 1, Fig. 5), measuring 6.00m long x 1.70m wide was opened up in the yard to the northeast of the Assembly Hall buildings.

The modern overburden was removed by mechanical excavator using a toothless ditching bucket, under archaeological supervision. A considerable depth of modern make-up was encountered, with natural clay - and a large linear feature cut into the natural - encountered some distance beyond safe depths for hand excavation. Taking health and safety restrictions into account, and with the agreement of the Borough Archaeologist, the feature was excavated by machine, with recording of evidence deeper than 1.20m carried out from the side of the trench. Recording of features and deposits was on *pro-forma* context sheets, scale drawings and photographs.

## 5 HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING

### 5.1 Historic Map Evidence

Kempson and Robins' plan of Wednesbury of 1799 shows the area to the west of St Bartholemews Church to be entirely undeveloped, lacking at this date even the road layout of the later town. The apportionment (no.316) is listed, in the reference accompanying Kempson and Robins plan, as being in the ownership of a certain Mr Ward, part of fairly extensive land holdings in the area. Despite a rapid growth of industry and corresponding rise of population in Wednesbury in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, much new housing was created within existing courts and yards and few new roads were laid out. Ede (1962, 255) asserts that Wellcroft Street was one of few new streets to be developed between 1799 and 1846 and this is confirmed by a comparison of the Kempson and Robins' plan with the Tithe Map of 1846. On the latter plan (Figure 3a), Wellcroft Street can be seen to have been laid out, though development at this date is confined largely to the southern side; to the north, as far as Hall

End, the land is relatively clear of development and is recorded in the Wednesbury Tithe Terrier as croft, under arable cultivation in the ownership of John Russell of the successful gas tube manufacturing family. The corner plot of Wellcroft Street and Ethelfleda Terrace was occupied at this date by John Russell's Gas Tube Manufactory (apportionment no. 439), commonly known at the time as the 'Top Works' to distinguish it from the Crown Tube Factory ('Bottom Works'). This layout is seen in more detail in the large scale (44in/ft) 'Plan of the Town of Wednesbury' prepared by William White Fereday in 1853 for the Health of Towns Act (Figure 3b).

The 19<sup>th</sup> /early 20<sup>th</sup> century antiquarian Frederick William Hackwood identifies 1857 as the construction date for the 'Wellcroft Street chapel....used by the Christian Brethren' (Hackwood 1900, 90). He continues.. 'the Plymouth Brethren, till some year or two ago met at the Temperance Hall, but have lately joined the Wellcroft Street congregation' (ibid.). The source of the 1857 construction date is unreferenced.

By the time of the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1890 (Figure 4), development had progressed on the northern side of Wellcroft Street, though to the south, Russell's Tube Manufactory is no longer in existence having been abandoned in 1876 in favour of a new premises in Walsall (Johnson 1962, 13). On the western part of the current development site, a 'Meeting Room' has by this date been constructed, corresponding to the western range of the building as recorded.

The structure maintains a similar footprint in the Ordnance Survey editions of 1903 and 1919 (Figure 4), though it is here referred to as a 'chapel'. A series of associated structures are evident within the yard to the east of the chapel, specifically a narrow range aligned along the southern site boundary. All traces of these structures were removed at the time of the extension of the chapel, which occurred between the Ordnance Survey editions of 1919 and 1938 (Figure 4), the latter of which shows an enlarged structure on the plan of the standing building.

The building is listed as a 'chapel' in use variously by the Plymouth or Christian Brethren in various trade directories of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Post Office Directory 1870, p.710; Kelly's Directory 1919, 513; Kelly's Directory 1940, 509).

## 5.2 Reference Terminology

The Assembly Hall is aligned perpendicular to Wellcroft Street, which itself runs on a WSW-ENE alignment, rising from Trowse Lane in the west to Ethelfleda Terrace below St. Bartholemew's Church some 150m to the east. To avoid overly long orientational references, however, the axis of the building is here assumed to be on a simple north-south alignment; thus the Wellcroft Street elevation will be referred to as the south elevation, while the range to the WSW side of the site will be referred to as the west range.

## 5.3 Site Layout and Building Plan

The Assembly Hall building occupies the western part of a plot, measuring approximately 28m x 20m midway along the northern side of Wellcroft Street (Figure 5). The eastern side of the plot comprises a yard, c.19.50m (N/S) x 8m (E/W), enclosed by brick-built walls to south, east and north and bounded by the structure of the Assembly Hall itself to the west. Access to the yard is via an iron gate in the eastern part of the south wall.

The Assembly Hall is approximately square in plan comprising two adjacent, north-south aligned ranges with a twin-gabled elevation fronting onto Wellcroft Street (Figure 6). The structure has overall plan dimensions of 17.10m (N/S) x 17.28m (E/W). The western of these two ranges is the structure indicated on the early Ordnance Survey maps (1890, 1903 and 1919), while the eastern range represents the early 20<sup>th</sup> century extension.

## 5.4 Exterior Elevations

### *The South Elevation*

The south elevation (Plate 1) faces onto Wellcroft Street, and has twin gables reflecting the two range plan. Each gable end is accessed via a central doorway, that to the west being round headed and that to the east, segmental headed, both in brick with chamfered jambs and head. To each side of the western door are simple rectangular window openings, with a moulded sign reading 'Assembly Hall' over. To the east, the doorway is flanked by paired windows with segmental heads to each side, those immediately adjacent to the door being slightly taller. A fifth window is set high in the gable, immediately above the door. The elevation is rendered, though some render has fallen away from the apex of the eastern gable, revealing the underlying brickwork. To the western eaves, an original moulded detail can be seen (Plate 2), which would have originally been repeated on the south-eastern corner of the primary structure.

A clear straight joint is visible at low level where the cement render has come loose (Plate 3).

### *The East Elevation*

The eastern elevation (Plate 4) is of exposed brickwork, laid in English garden wall bond with three courses of stretchers between header courses. The elevation displays regular fenestration of five paired window openings, save for the northernmost example, where the northern opening is a door. Windows are rectangular with segmental heads, the arches comprising two courses of headers. Cills are sloping and in grey engineering brick. The roof of the east range is slated with a plain ridge and has renewed, plastic guttering.

### *The North Elevation*

Access to the northern elevation was restricted at the time of survey, the back wall of the rear extensions representing a party garden wall with the properties of Park Street to the north. Where visible, the brickwork is unrendered and laid in English garden wall bond, with five courses of stretchers between header courses. The rear gable of the western range has a parapet with coping of grey engineering brick and a brick stack rising above the apex, extending above the ridge line, which is enhanced with decorated ridge tiles. The eastern gable, by contrast, is plain. A further, tall brick flue rises above the valley. Two windows within the rear wall of the western range are visible within the rear extension buildings. They have chamfered brick jambs and segmental heads and are iron-framed, of 54 panes (9 rows of 6), with a small, 4-pane top hinged opening light in the centre (Plate 5). The eastern window has been converted to a door; the western jamb has been extended through to floor level, though the original sill level can be seen to the east and the head of the original window remains *in-situ* (Plate 6).

### *The West Elevation*

The western elevation is plain with four evenly spaced, rectangular window openings serving the hall of the west range and a single, round-headed door to the north, serving the back room. The brickwork is rendered and scored in imitation of ashlarwork. The end plate of an iron building tie can be seen at the southern end of the elevation, together with a wooden sign announcing the 'Gospel Hall' and scheduling weekly service times. At the south-west corner, a moulded brick eaves detail survives (Plate 2), which would originally have been repeated at the south-eastern corner of the primary range, before its extension in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The roof of the west range is slated with decorative ridge tiles.

## **5.5 Interior Description**

### *The West Range*

The western part of the Assembly Hall represents the primary build, dated by Hackwood to 1857. It comprises a single range and has overall internal dimensions of 16.25m long (N/S) x 6.15m wide (E/W) and stands 6.60m tall to the apex of its ridged roof (Plates 7 and 8). Internally, the range is subdivided by a transverse wall of brick construction (Figure 6), creating a four bay hall (12.1m x 6.15m) and a small 'back room' (3.7m x 6.15m). Access between the hall and back room is provided by opposing doors to the east and west (Plate 9), which are plain-chamfered jambs with flat heads and display broach-stops similar to the detailing of the hall roof (see below).

The roof over the hall comprises four regular bays (c.3m), demarcated by three queen post trusses with elegantly curved braces (Figure 7c). In comparison to the roof of the later, eastern range, the carpentry here shows some architectural pretension, with all principal members being plain chamfered and broach stopped at joints to respect adjoining members. The roof is supported on a single tier of purlins, which are supported directly by the queen posts. The lower joint of queen post and tie is secured by an iron bolt, while the upper junction of principal rafters and straining beam are reinforced by iron straps. The roof of the range is ceiled over at the level of the straining beam. Elaborate circular vents are located centrally within each bay. The roof structure of the northern 'back room' was not accessible.

The range is lit by two large, rectangular window openings in the south front and four similar openings in the west elevation (Plate 10). Within the 'back room', the western wall contains a single doorway with semi-circular head and glazed fan-light, while within the north wall are two multi-pane iron-framed windows with four pane opening light, set to either side of a central fireplace which currently houses a 1960s gas fire. The eastern of the north wall windows has been extended to form a doorway serving the rear extensions, the original jamb of the window being clearly visible to the eastern side of the door.

The eastern wall of the west range comprises the party wall with the eastern extension. It is a plain wall of brick construction and includes a connecting door between the two ranges at the northern and southern ends. There is a step up of 6in. (0.15m) between from the western to the eastern range. That the wall contains no blocked window openings indicates that it was mostly rebuilt at the time of the construction of the eastern range. The northern return of the east side of the range survives however, evidenced by the straight joint visible externally (see §.6.3.1) and by the building tie which extends from the west elevation (§.6.3.4) and is visible within the east range (§.6.4.2). A possible straight joint visible beneath the render and paintwork in the south-eastern corner of the range shows the probable extent of the rebuild.

The flooring of the west range is in 7in. (0.18m) wide softwood boards, aligned north-south, and supported on 5in. (0.13m) deep joists at 18in. (0.45m) centres over a 0.5m void.

Paired heating pipes run the full length of the hall at low level, passing through the brickwork of the transverse partition wall. Within the back room, the upper pipe rises above the western door of the west wall and continues around the north elevation at high level before dropping in the north-east corner. Iron three-column radiators are located centrally beneath each window in the west wall of the hall, and a further single radiator is located at the south end of the east wall, slightly to the north of the southern connecting door.

### *The East Range*

The eastern range of the Assembly Hall was added at some point between the Ordnance Survey map of 1919 (Figure 4c) and the photograph showing the twin gabled structure in 1936 (Plate 16). It comprises a single, open range, measuring 16.1m long (N/S) x 9.9m wide (E/W), and stands 7.1 m tall to the apex of its ridged roof (Plate 11).

The roof of the east range is of five regular bays, demarcated by four simple queen post trusses which carry two tiers of purlins, supported on wooden cleats on the outside of the principal rafters (Figure 7c). The lower joint of queen post and tie is secured by an iron bolt, while the upper junction of principal rafters and straining beam are reinforced by iron straps. The carpentry of the roof is overall of a much simpler, utilitarian design than that of the earlier range to the west.

The range is lit by five windows in the south gable, two to either side of the door with a further window high in the gable above the door, which is shielded from the body of the hall by a timber screen with lateral doors (Plate 12). The east wall displays regular fenestration, two windows to each bay, save for the northernmost bay, where a window is paired with a door opening to the exterior. All window openings have segmental heads with wooden framed casements with upper, bottom-hinged opening lights in the northern example of each pair (Plate 13).

The western wall of the east range comprises the party wall with the earlier, western range. It is of brick construction and includes connecting doors between the two ranges at the northern and southern ends. As has been discussed above, the lack of blocked openings within this wall indicates that it was largely rebuilt at the time of the construction of the eastern range. At the south west corner of the range, however, a circular end plate for a building tie can be seen at high level (Plate 14); this tie strengthens the western range and the later brickwork of the east range can be clearly seen to abut it, showing that a stub of the northern return was incorporated within the new party wall.

The flooring of the east range is in 4½in. (0.12m) wide softwood boards aligned north-south; the substructure of the floor was not observed.

Paired heating pipes run the full length of the range at low level, rising above the door at the north-east corner, and across the northern end wall. Iron three-column radiators are located centrally beneath each pair of windows in the east wall (Plate 13), and below the eastern windows of the south elevation.

### *The Rear Extensions*

To the rear of the western range are two late extensions, the first running the width of the range and the second occupying the space to the north-west of the Assembly Hall structure.

The extensions form infill buildings between the Assembly Hall and adjacent boundary walls, and are accessed via a doorway created from the eastern of the two windows of the west range, north wall (§.6.3.3). The first room comprises a rectangular plan, 1.2 m wide (N/S) x 6.7m long (E/W), with a simple lean to roof from the gable end of the west range to the rear boundary wall of the Park Road properties to the north. This room appears to have most recently been used for storage, though it probably originated as a boiler room for the heating of the Assembly Hall. To the west of this room is a small (2m x 3.6m) modern kitchen.

## 6 TRIAL TRENCH EVALUATION RESULTS

### 6.1 Trench 1

Trench 1 was oriented approximately north-north-west to south-south-east, and measured 6.00m x 1.70m (see Figure 5 for location, Figure 8 for plan and section, Plates 17-19). It varied from 2.00m to 3.00m in depth.

The natural mid orange-brown clay **[1005]** was encountered at a depth of 2.00m from the ground surface in the southern part of the trench. This was cut by the large feature **[1006]**, interpreted as a ditch running across the trench from southwest to northeast in the northern part of the trench. It was 1.00m deep and at least 2.20m wide - with the northwestern side and the full extent of the feature not established. The ditch was filled with mid reddish brown silty clay **[1007]**. A few small fragments of unburnt coal were found in the fill. There were no dateable finds. The base of the ditch was fairly flat at a depth of 3m from the ground surface.

Sealing the natural and the ditch was a layer of dark grey brown silty clay **[1004]** with frequent charcoal flecks, up to 0.30cm thick. This layer contained pottery and other artefacts dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Above 1004 were a series of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century make-up layers. Layer **[1002]** is actually a composite layer made up of many smaller dumps of mixed material, but broadly representing one episode of deposition. It is up to 1.20m thick. Most of the material is a grey ashy industrial waste, with frequent lenses of dark sandy silt and charcoal slanting down from south to north. Within 1002 is a horizontal band of light orange brown silty clay **[1003]**, about 0.20m thick, which is redeposited natural clay mixed with brick and other demolition material.

Layer **[1001]** was a mid greyish brown clay silt, about 0.50m thick, again with numerous internal layers of brick rubble and other mixed material of fairly recent origin.

This sequence of layers was sealed by a 0.05m layer of modern tarmac **[1000]**.

## 7 DISCUSSION

### *Building Recording*

Reference to historic plans show clearly that the western range of the standing building is the earliest part of the structure, the 'Meeting Room' or 'Chapel' indicated on the early Ordnance Survey maps. Hackwood gives a construction date of 1857 for this structure though, unfortunately, his source is not referenced. What can be said for certain is that the land is certainly undeveloped in 1853 when Fereday produced his *Health of Towns Act* plan, while the structure clearly exists by 1890.

Between the years of 1890 and 1919, additional buildings were erected within the yard to the east of the chapel, though all trace of these structures has been lost to later developments.

At some point between the publication of the Ordnance Survey map of 1919 (Figure 4) and the historic photograph of Wellcroft Street taken from the tower of St Bartholemew's in 1936 (Plate 16), the plan area of the hall has been almost tripled with the addition of the eastern range, first shown cartographically in the Ordnance Survey map of 1938.

Much of the historical context of the Assembly Hall has been lost through the process of urban renewal undertaken in the past 40 years, with the Assembly Hall representing the only building present in the photograph of 1936 still to be standing today.

#### *Trial Trench Evaluation*

In the evaluation, the 2m depth of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century overburden testifies to the fact that the ground level has been considerably raised in recent times. Much of this make-up material may have been deposited in order to make the level platform on which the Assembly Hall was built. However, the fact that the natural clay is directly overlaid by a late 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> century layer indicates that, prior to the raising of ground level, some truncation of natural subsoils took place.

The ditch observed to run southwest to northeast across the trench did not produce any dating evidence. Indeed, the absence of finds might tend to indicate an earlier rather than a later date, given the enormous quantities of finds from post-medieval ditches found on sites at Meeting Street and Camp Lane. The small amounts of unburnt coal could have derived from coal deposits close to the surface nearby. Although coal is on the whole a modern fuel, its use extends back at least to the Late Iron Age – as demonstrated by the large amounts of coal fragments, some burned or charred, found in the defensive ditches of the enclosed Late Iron Age settlement at Port Seton near Edinburgh (British Archaeology 1995).

The ditch could be associated with the Iron Age hillfort thought to be located on Church Hill, although the existence of this monument is questionable. Another possibility is that it is associated in some way with the Saxon and medieval town of Wednesbury, or even with the manor of Wednesbury located nearby. Alternatively, it might be part of the post-medieval ditch encountered at Meeting Street – itself perhaps an extension of the town boundary ditch found in recent excavations by Camp Lane.

There is also the possibility that the 'ditch', once its full extent is known, might turn out to be a non-linear feature such as a quarry. Identification as a ditch cannot be wholly secure until the other side of the feature is located.

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Excavation and recording was carried out by Matt Edgeworth, Emma Sautejeau and Sean Daly. Matt Edgeworth wrote up the evaluation trial trench results. Ric Tyler conducted the historic building recording and wrote up the results. Nigel Dodds and Ric Tyler produced the illustrations. Malcolm Hislop managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology. Birmingham Archaeology would like to thank Fay de Souza of the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record, and Graham Eyre-Morgan and Charlotte Lewis of Sandwell MBC for their advice and assistance.

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# APPENDIX 1

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD  
AND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**ASSEMBLY HALL, WELLCROFT STREET, WEDNESBURY**

**SANDWELL MBC**

**FEBRUARY 2007**



**Site:** Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury

**Agent:** Andrew Lane, ACP Ltd, 01902 423428

**Planning Officer:** John Dadd (0121 569 4269)

**Borough Archaeologist:** Graham Eyre-Morgan (0121 569 4025)

**Assistant Archaeologist:** Charlotte Lewis (0121 569 4217)

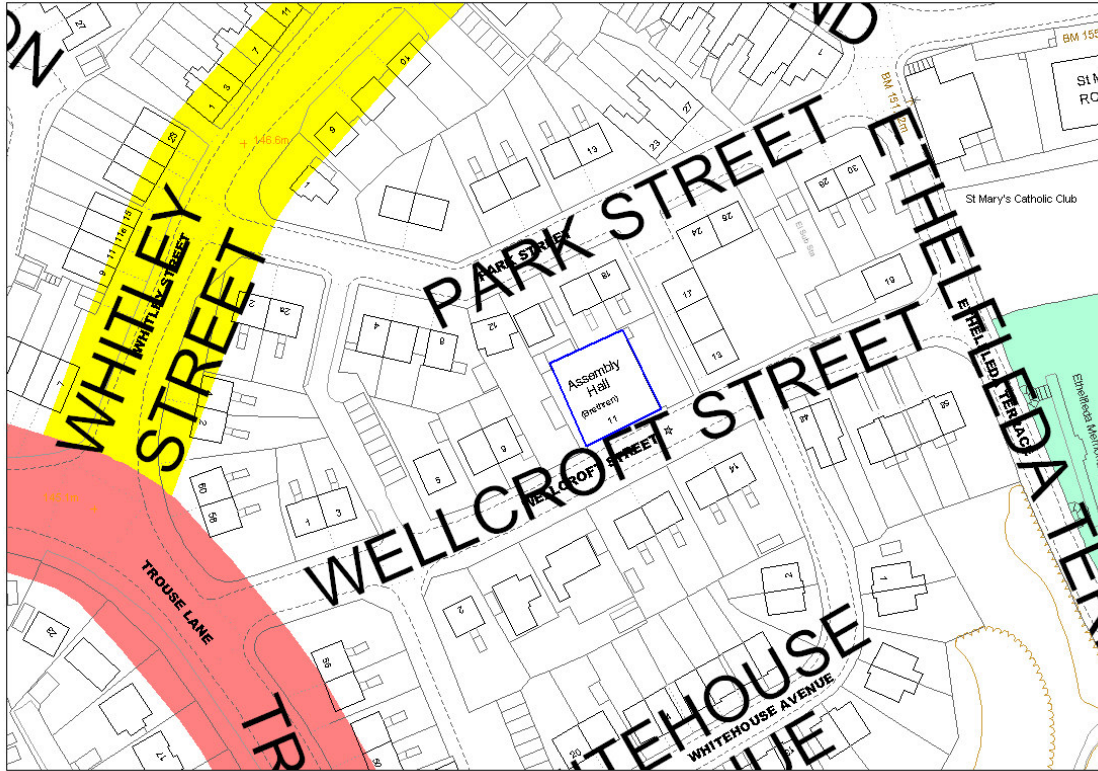
*This archaeological brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Borough Archaeologist should be contacted. Any written scheme of investigation resulting from this brief shall only be considered for the same period. The contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their written scheme of investigation, as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.*

## **1. Introduction**

This brief has been prepared by the Assistant Archaeologist of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. The brief sets out the requirements for a Historic Building record and an archaeological evaluation by trial trenching. Given the history of the area, a requirement of the planning consent is for the developer to undertake a Historic Building Record of the site in advance of its demolition. The purpose of evaluation is to determine the presence/absence of archaeological features within the application area so that an informed decision can be made on their preservation or otherwise. This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of the Condition can be adequately discharged.

## **2. Site Location and Description**

The land subject to development is the Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury, lying to the north west of the town centre. The Assembly Hall is identified on the 1890 historic map epoch and later identified as a chapel on the 1903 epoch. The site is located within a designated area of archaeological potential as defined in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Councils Unitary Development Plan.



**Site of development – The Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury**

**3. Planning Background**

3.1 A planning application (DC/04/42750) was approved subject to conditions on the 19/07/2004.

3.2 Based on the advice given in *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning* (DoE 1990, paras 21-22):

***“ No development and preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.”***

The evaluation is designed provide sufficient information on the presence/absence, nature, quality and extent of any below ground remains. If present, the investigation will identify any archaeological remains thereby enabling the formulation, if appropriate, of an additional

programme of excavation; should the deposits be of 'national importance' there would be a presumption in favour of their in-situ preservation.

3.3 This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of any future Condition can be adequately discharged.

#### **4. Historical Background**

This application forms part of DC/04/42750 lying within the confines of the historic core of the medieval town and possible Iron Age hill fort and the 14<sup>th</sup> century church of Saint Bartholomew's stands a short distance to the northeast. The Assembly Hall is identified on the 1890 historic map epoch and later identified as a chapel on the 1903 epoch. The development area lies within an area defined as having "Archaeological Potential" and the general area is identified on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record is PRN 5847 Wednesbury settlement. Reports deposited at Sandwell SMR include "Excavations in Wednesbury, 1988 & 1989: The Medieval and Post Medieval settlement, and the 17<sup>th</sup> C Pottery Industry".

The current application provides a fresh opportunity of examining the origins and development of the medieval town. Isolated pottery fragments are also likely to provide important information on the chronology of the town, the status of the inhabitants and their general living conditions. Other archaeological remains could also be revealed.

Due to the location of the proposed development, which was the focus of early medieval occupation it is recommended that an archaeological evaluation (trial trenching) is undertaken by a professional archaeological contractor to determine the archaeological potential of the site. Recent excavations at Meeting Street revealed a large ditch that runs in the general direction of the proposed development. The feature also revealed a large assemblage of early post-medieval pottery shards. Excavations at the Shambles/Upper Russell Street and Market Street have all revealed medieval remains. **Should archaeology be discovered it is possible that further archaeological work may required at the site before any development may take place.**

## 5. Requirement for Work

### Archaeological Evaluation

5.1 The purpose of the archaeological investigation is to locate and identify any surviving remains within the constraint area; in this particular instance this office wishes to know the extent, the date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits, which may be present under the area, proposed for development. The work must also assess the relative importance of these deposits, and the potential loss of any archaeological information by the development, therefore substantiating any need for further excavation or change in the planning consent.

5.2 A **5% sample** of the development area will be investigated by trial trenching and the layout should be designed to ensure uniform coverage across the site; a trench plan must be appended to the specification.

5.3 The site-specific aims are:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered
- To provide further information on the origins and development of Wednesbury from the medieval period to the present day
- To contribute to any existing corpus of academic knowledge
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions

5.4 The evaluation recommended above is only the first stage in the archaeological investigation of each of the sites recommended. The scope of any further archaeological recording on each of the sites will depend on the results of the preliminary (and second phase if appropriate) evaluation of surviving archaeological deposits.

5.5 If evaluation indicates that significant archaeological evidence survives on the site, and would be negatively impacted by the proposed redevelopment, a further stage of detailed archaeological excavation and recording will be carried out, in accordance with a site-specific

Written Scheme of Investigation approved by the Borough Archaeologist, which sets out specific aims of further recording work.

### **Historic Building Record**

5.6 The objectives of the Historic Building Record are as follows:

- To establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury
- To make a detailed record of the site in accordance with current best practice. The record will need to consider its historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology, and function.
- To create a detailed site archive that is to be deposited with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

## **6.0 General Methodology**

6.1 The historic building record and archaeological evaluation shall be supported by a written scheme of investigation.

6.2 The building survey work shall be undertaken by a Historic Buildings Analyst with proven expertise and qualifications in the recording/investigation of industrial buildings. Details including the name, qualifications, and experience of the Historic Buildings Analyst together with a proposed timetable shall be included within the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). CV's, previous examples of work and references from heritage curators may be requested prior to approving any resulting WSI.

6.3 The archaeological evaluation shall be undertaken by a professional archaeologist and the contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Details including the name, qualifications and experience, of the site director and all other project personnel (including specialist staff) shall be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist as part of the written scheme of investigation.

6.4 Notification of the supervisor/project manager's name and the members of the team shall be provided in writing to Borough Archaeologist at least one week in advance of commencement of work.

6.5 The site code for this project is WSWS07.

6.6 All the latest Health and Safety guidelines shall be followed on site. Those who wish to undertake the work should ensure they are adequately insured, to cover all eventualities, including risks to third parties. Sandwell MBC and its officers cannot be held responsible for any accidents which may occur to Contractors engaged to undertake this survey while attempting to confirm to this Brief.

6.7 Should the client wish to curtail the investigation for any reason at any point in advance of its completion the contractor will still be expected to produce a full report including specialist finds assessments within the timetable set out below.

6.8 The IFA's *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations* should be used for additional guidance in the production of the written scheme of investigation, the content of the report, and the general execution of the project.

## **7. Methodology**

### **Evaluation Methodology**

7.1 The contractor shall ensure detailed study of all mains service locations and avoid damage to these.

7.2 Prior to the commencement of on-site works the contractor must consult the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (Fay de Souza 0121 568 4216) and undertake a rapid map regression exercise based on the sources held at the Local Studies Section of Smethwick Library. This information will assist in on-site interpretation.

7.3 It is recommended that a minimum of 5 % of the area to be developed is investigated by trial trenching. The trial trenches will be machine excavated using a toothless ditching bucket,



and under the supervision and to the satisfaction of a professional archaeologist. The exposed sub-soil or archaeological horizon will be hand cleaned in all trenches and any archaeological deposits or negative features planned.

7.4 At least 50% of all contained features shall be excavated. A stated percentage of structural and linear features to be excavated shall be provided in the WSI. For those trenches where substantial nineteenth and twentieth century masonry remains are encountered hand dug test pits will be excavated within the trench in order to examine the presence/absence of earlier remains. NOTE: In some circumstances it may be necessary to use shoring to support the sides of the trench, but advice must be sought from the Borough Archaeologist before employing this methodology.

7.5 Details of how all archaeological contexts and artefacts will be excavated, surveyed, recovered and recorded shall be provided. The site grid will be tied to the national grid.

7.6 Details of the site planning policy shall be given in the WSI. The normal preferred policy for the scale of archaeological site plans is 1:20 and sections at 1:10, unless circumstances indicate that other scales would be more appropriate.

7.7 The photographic record shall consist of high quality digital colour and black and white copies. This shall include both general and feature specific photographs; a photographic scale (including north arrow) shall be included in the case of detailed photographs. A photographic register and supporting plan detailing as a minimum feature number, location, and direction of shot shall accompany the photographic record.

7.8 The contractor must arrange, through a suitably qualified specialist, the assessment of the environmental and metallurgical potential of the site through the examination of suitable deposits. Guidance should be sought from the appropriate English Heritage Regional Advisor in Archaeological Science and details of the methodology included within the WSI.

### **Historic Building Recording Methodology**

7.9 All the appropriate secondary sources that are likely to be pertinent to the study area should be consulted (Victoria County History, etc.). Historic maps, Post Office Directories

and collections of old photographs/postcards where available from the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (M Waldron 0121 558 2561). The following repositories/organisations should be also be consulted:

- National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon
- Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (Fay de Souza 0121 569 4216)
- Pertinent County Record Offices

7.10 The completion of 7.9 will inform the ground survey of the study area. Based on any existing survey plan each building/structure/area within the site shall be numbered, described and photographed. Based on the RCHME conventions (1996) a current floor plan at scale 1:50 will be made of the building. This should show the position of doors, windows, roof trusses and associated fixtures/fittings.

N.B. Any structures that have recently been demolished and are important in the understanding/interpretation of the site must be included within the description.

7.11 Based on the RCHME conventions (1996) a single north/south section at scale 1:50 will be made through the building depicting the walls, truss position and form. The location of the section must be shown on the plan.

7.12 The descriptive and interpretive analysis of the fabric shall be undertaken in accordance with the research objectives set out above. This should include the date, function, dimensions, materials, methods of construction, external fenestration, internal plan form, fixtures/fittings and phasing; the level of detail being based on the perceived significance of each numbered item.

7.13 A photographic record consisting of colour slides and, black and white prints together with negatives will be produced. This should include both general shots and details of individual buildings/features/fixtures. A photographic scale should be included in the case of detailed shots and a photographic register together with a supporting plan detailing (as a minimum) location and direction of shot must accompany the record.

## 8.0 Finds

8.1 All finds, where appropriate, shall be washed and marked with both the site code and context number.

8.2 The WSI shall include an agreed list of specialist consultants who might be required to conserve and/or report on finds, and advise or report on other aspects of the investigation.

8.3 Finds work should be to accepted professional standards and adhere to the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Guidelines for Finds Work*. Details of the finds retrieval policy must be included within the WSI.

8.4 The requirements for conservation and storage shall be agreed with Wednesbury Museum prior to the start of work, and confirmed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist.

## 9.0 Results

9.1 The draft full report including all specialist assessments of artefact assemblages shall be submitted to the Borough Archaeologist within six weeks of completing the fieldwork for approval. Once approved a total of **eight** copies plus a copy on CD-ROM are to be supplied to the Borough Archaeologist for general distribution.

9.2 The report must contain:

- The aims and methods adopted during the course of the Historic Building record and archaeological evaluation.
- Detailed results including a suitable conclusion and discussion. This must be linked to the research objectives cited above and consider the sites in their local, regional and national context.
- Based on 7.9 and 7.10, above a time depth spatial narrative will be produced of the study area. Historic and interpretative maps together with historical photographs should be used to support the text.
- An assessment of the local, regional national importance of the site. The latter should be based on the criteria for scheduling as set out in Annex 4 of PPG 16 (DoE 1990).

- Impact Assessment and recommended mitigation strategy will be used to assess the impact of the proposal on the surviving archaeological resource.
- The contractor is also expected to formulate a mitigation strategy and future research programme. The latter should be based on national/regional/local research frameworks and identify the aims/objectives of any future excavation.
- Although the emphasis should be on those deposits that are likely to be destroyed, the wider potential the site must also be considered
- A concise non-technical summary of the project results
- All specialist reports and assessments
- Site location plan, copies of any historical maps and a representative sample of the photographs including colour prints, Map regression analysis
- Location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development. All corners of each trench shall be given a 10 figure grid reference
- A section/s within each trench showing the depth of deposits including the present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale
- Sufficient plans by period and area to aid interpretation
- Artefact illustrations that would be submitted in any future publication

9.3 The following appendices should also be included:

- Location and summary of the archive contents
- Completed Sites and Monuments Record summary sheet (copy attached to brief)
- Photographic register
- Historic Building Recording and Archaeological brief, the approved contractors' written scheme of investigation together with the completed pro-forma and site location plan which were submitted as part of the planning application

9.4 The proposed format of the report will be described within the WSI.

## **10.0 Archive**

10.1 Before commencing any fieldwork, the Contractor must contact the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (High Street, Smethwick, West Midlands B661AB. Tel. 0121 5582561), to determine the requirements for the deposition of the archive.

10.2 The archive should include the record photographs and digital information together with a copy of the Report.

10.3 The paper archive should include the photographs, negatives, colour slides, film register and plan together with a copy of the report. Photographic prints should be re-produced at a minimum of five by four inches and labelled on the back using indelible ink with the film and frame number, date, photographers name together with the site code, name and grid reference; the photographs being mounted in archival quality sleeves. Digital copies of photographs on CD can also be added. The archive should also contain any copies of the key historical documents/photographs that maybe in the possession of the site owners.

10.4 It is the responsibility of the Contractor to meet the Community History and Archives Service requirements with regard to the preparation of material for deposition.

10.5 Written notification of the commencement of fieldwork shall be given to Community History and Archives Service at the same time as the Borough Archaeologist.

10.6 A summary of the contents of the archive shall be supplied to Borough Archaeologist at the time of deposition.

10.7 Sandwell MBC supports the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) project. The overall aim of the OASIS project is to provide an online index to the mass of archaeological grey literature that has been produced as a result of the advent of large-scale developer funded fieldwork. The archaeological contractor must therefore complete the online OASIS form at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/>. Contractors are advised to contact Sandwell MBC Sites and Monuments Record prior to completing the form. Once a report has become a public document by submission to or incorporation into the SMR, Sandwell MBC Sites and Monuments Record may place the information on a web-site.

Please ensure that you and your client agree to this procedure in writing as part of the process of submitting the report to the case officer at Sandwell MBC.

## **11.0 Monitoring**

11.1 The Borough Archaeologist will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project and should be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, interpretation and reporting stages.

11.2 Written Notification of the start date will be given to the Borough Archaeologist at least one week before the commencement of work and once the fieldwork stage of the investigation has been completed.

## **12.0 Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation**

12.1 Any variations to the WSI shall be agreed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist before being implemented.

12.2 This Brief has been written following a cursory examination of the site by the Borough Archaeologist, potential contractors are therefore strongly advised to carry out their own inspection before submitting a written quotation.

12.3 If on first visiting the site or at any time during the recording exercise, it appears that:

- i) part or the whole of the site is not amenable to the recording programme outlined above, and/or
  - ii) an alternative approach may be more appropriate or likely to produce more informative results, and/or
  - iii) any features that should be recorded as having a bearing on the interpretation of the site have been omitted,
- then it is expected that the Contractor will contact the Borough Archaeologist as a matter of urgency.

For further information regarding the content of this Brief please contact the author at the address below. As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content and presentation of this Archaeological Brief.

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West Midlands  
B70 8RU

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**SANDWELL MBC SMR  
SUMMARY SHEET**

<b>Site name/Address:</b> Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury	
<b>Borough:</b> Sandwell	<b>NGR:</b>
<b>Type of Work:</b> Archaeological Evaluation	<b>Site Code:</b> WSWCS07
<b>Contractor:</b>	<b>Date of Work:</b>
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b>	
<b>Title of Report:</b>	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<b>Author of Summary:</b>	<b>Date of Summary:</b>



## **APPENDIX 2**

# **ASSEMBLY HALL, WELLCROFT STREET, WEDNESBURY**

## **WRITTEN SCHEME OF INVESTIGATION FOR HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This written scheme of investigation (hereafter WSI) describes a programme of archaeological work to be undertaken by Birmingham Archaeology at the site of the Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury. The study area lies within the core of the medieval town and possible Iron Age hill fort. The Assembly Hall is identified on the 1890 map and as a chapel on the 1903 map. A large ditch recorded during recent excavations at Meeting Street, which contained a large assemblage of early post-medieval pottery, extended in the general direction of the site. Excavations at the Shambles/Upper Russell Street and Market Street have all revealed medieval remains.

### **2.0 Site Description and Location**

The Assembly Hall is situated on the northwest side of Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury, Sandwell, West Midlands, to the northwest of the town centre. The site is within a designated area of archaeological potential as defined in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's Unitary Development Plan.

### **3.0 Objectives**

#### Evaluation

The broad objective of the evaluation is to locate and identify any surviving remains within the constraint area in order to assess the extent, date, nature and state of preservation of any archaeological deposits. The relative importance of any such deposits will be assessed, in order to inform the planning process in relation to the threat to the archaeological resource that development may pose.

Site specific objectives are:

- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area.
- To determine the nature, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To provide further insight on the origins and development of Wednesbury from the medieval period to the present day.
- To contribute to the existing corpus of academic knowledge.
- To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

#### Historic Building Recording

- To establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the Assembly Hall.
- To make a detailed record of the site in accordance with current best practice. The record will consider its historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology and function.

- To create a detailed site archive and deposit with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

## 4.0 Methodology

### Evaluation

In advance of the evaluation a rapid map regression will be undertaken based on the sources held at the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library. This will inform onsite interpretation.

A single 5m x 1m trench will be excavated across the site. A JCB excavator, or similar as appropriate, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket, will be used to remove the modern surface and compacted overburden, working under archaeological supervision. Where necessary, to comply with health and safety requirements trench sides will be stepped and/or battered at an angle of 45 degrees to ensure safe working. The subsoil surface, or the uppermost horizon of archaeological deposits so exposed will be hand cleaned with any exposed archaeological deposits or negative features planned at an appropriate scale.

A representative sample of the features present will be hand-excavated, until sufficient is known to meet the objectives of the evaluation. Namely, to provide information concerning the survival and complexity of feature fills, and to recover artefactual and ecofactual samples for analysis. The sampling of features will be in the order of 50% of all contained features, 20% of structural features and a 1.0m section of linear/ curvilinear features.

Hand dug test-pits, or machine dug pits where appropriate (subject to consultation with the Borough Archaeologist), will be excavated within trenches where 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century masonry remains make it difficult to assess the nature, presence/ absence of the archaeological deposits.

All stratigraphic sequences will be recorded, even where no archaeology is present. Features will be planned at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50, and sections will be drawn of all cut features and significant vertical stratigraphy at a scale of 1:10 or 1:20. A comprehensive written record will be maintained using a continuous numbered context system on *pro-forma* context and feature cards. Written records and scale plans will be supplemented by photographs using monochrome and colour print and colour slide photography. Four megapixel digital photographs will be taken for archive and reference purposes. Trial-trenches will be surveyed-in using an EDM total station or other appropriate survey instruments and tied to the national grid.

Recovered finds will be cleaned and marked and remedial conservation work will be undertaken as necessary. Treatment of all finds will conform to guidance contained within 'A strategy for the care and investigation of finds' published by English Heritage.

The full site archive will include all artefactual and/or ecofactual remains recovered from the site. The site archive will be prepared according to guidelines set down in Appendix 3 of the Management of Archaeology Projects (English Heritage, 1991); the Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage (Walker 1990) and Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological collections (Museum and Art Galleries Commission, 1992). Finds and the paper archive will be deposited with the appropriate repository, subject to permission from the landowner.

It is anticipated that the fieldwork will be undertaken over a period of one week.

### Historic Building Recording

In general the work will be carried out with due regard to the advice offered by the Institute of Archaeologists (IFA 2001), and English Heritage (2006).

#### *Documentary Research*

A search will be made in the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library of all appropriate secondary sources that are likely to be pertinent to the study area including the VCH, trade directories, historic maps and illustrations. In addition we will consult the NMR, Sandwell SMR and pertinent county record offices.

#### *Drawn Record*

The drawn record will be based on existing architectural drawings, which will be checked for accuracy and annotated with archaeological detail. The drawings, which will be at a scale of 1:50, will comprise a floor plan and a single north/south section depicting walls, truss position and form.

#### *Written Record*

A written record of each building will be compiled in the field on *pro forma* building and room record sheets, noting details of building type, date(s), materials, plan, and elevations.

#### *Photographic Record*

The photographic survey will comprise both general and detail shots, and will be carried out using a 35mm camera with black and white film, and a high resolution digital camera (Nikon D50). All detail shots will include a scale. All photographs will be recorded on a *pro forma* record sheet detailing subject, direction, photographer and date.

## **5.0 Staffing and Standards**

The archaeological programme will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Malcolm Hislop BA, PhD, MIFA, the evaluation supervised by an appropriately experienced supervisor and site assistant. The building recording will be undertaken by a specialist in the archaeology of buildings.

Specialist staff will be, where appropriate:

Dr Lawrence Barfield- Flint artefacts, freelance consultant lithics specialist.

Dr Ann Woodward- Prehistoric pottery, Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

Dr Jeremy Evans- Roman pottery, Honorary Research Fellow, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham.

C. Jane Evans- Roman pottery, freelance consultant pottery specialist

Stephanie Rátkai- Saxon, medieval and post-medieval pottery, Honorary Research Associate and Finds Researcher, University of Birmingham.

Erica Macey-Bracken- Small finds, Birmingham Archaeology, University of Birmingham

Dr Andrew Howard– Archaeo-Geomorphology, Lecturer in Archaeo-Geomorphology and Remote Sensing, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Matilda Holmes- Animal bone, freelance consultant archaeozoologist.

Dr David Smith- Micro-fauna, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr Megan Brickley- Human Bone, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Dr Roger White- Coins and brooches, Project Manager, Lecturer and Assistant Director (Development), Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham.

Jane Cowgill- slag and industrial residues, freelance consultant.

Rowena Gale- charcoal and wood. freelance consultant.

All staff will be appropriately qualified and experienced for their roles in the project, and will adhere to the standards of the Institute of Archaeologists, notably the *Code of Conduct* (rev. edn 2002) and the *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* (rev. edn 2001).

## **6.0 Reporting**

On completion of the fieldwork, post-excavation work, including finds processing/conservation, analysis and primary research, will be undertaken. A site archive will be compiled and an illustrated report will be prepared. The results including a full site matrix and all specialist reports will be presented in an illustrated report in both bound and electronic format. This report would be in the format required by the *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (published by English Heritage), to include:

- Non-technical summary.
- Site location
- Objectives
- Method
- Historical background and development
- Analytical building description
- Excavation narrative
- Assessment of local, regional and national significance based on Annexe 4 of PPG 16
- Impact assessment and mitigation strategy
- Specialist reports
- Location plan of site
- Historic maps
- Sample of photographs including colour prints.
- Location plan of trenches in relation to the proposed development with all corners of trenches given a ten figure grid reference.

- Section/s within the trench showing depth of deposits including present ground level with Ordnance Datum, vertical and horizontal scale.
- Plans by period and area to aid interpretation.
- Summary of the finds and environmental evidence.
- Artefact illustrations that would be submitted in any future publication.
- Appendices as specified in the archaeological brief.

A summary report will be submitted for inclusion in *West Midlands Archaeology*. If the results are considered of regional or national importance it may be appropriate to publish the report in an archaeological journal.

A draft full report including all specialist assessments will be submitted within six weeks of the completion of fieldwork. Eight copies of the final, approved report and one digital copy will be forwarded to the Borough Archaeologist for general distribution.

## **8.0 General**

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994, revised 2001).

A detailed Risk Assessment will be prepared prior to the commencement of fieldwork. All current health and safety legislation, regulations and guidance will be complied with. The excavation will conform to the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992* and *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology Manual* (SCAUM 1991).

Any human remains encountered will be initially left *in situ* and covered. In the event that human remains need to be removed this will be carried out under the terms of a Home Office Licence and adhering to relevant environmental health regulations. All finds which may constitute 'treasure' under the Treasure Act, 1997 will be removed to a safe place and reported to the local Coroner. If removal is not possible on the same working day as discovery, appropriate security arrangements will be provided to keep the finds safe from theft.

## **9.0 References**

Department of the Environment (DoE) 1990 *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*

English Heritage 2006, *Understanding Historic Buildings: a Guide to Good Recording Practice*

Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) 1994 *Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluations*. Revised 2001

Museums and Galleries Commission. 1992 *Standards in the museum care of archaeological collections*. London: Museums and Galleries Commission

Sandwell MBC, 2005, Archaeological Investigation, Cradley Heath Town Centre: Tesco Development. Phase IV.

Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM), 1991 *Health & Safety in Field Archaeology Manual*. Revised 1997

Walker, K. 1990 *Guidelines for the preparation of excavation archives for long-term storage*. UKIC, London

***Birmingham Archaeology***  
***March 2007***

## **APPENDIX 3**



## **Location and Summary of Archive**

### **Location**

The archive is being stored temporarily at the Birmingham Archaeology offices, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT pending transfer to the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

### **Summary**

- A copy of the report
- The drawing register
- One paper copy of the building drawings
- One paper copy of evaluation drawings
- One CD-R containing the architect's drawings
- Building and room record sheets
- Excavation context sheets
- The photographic register
- Two sets of 35mm black and white negatives
- Two sets of 35mm black and white contact prints
- Two CD-Rs containing digital images

## **APPENDIX 4**

**SANDWELL MBC SMR  
SUMMARY SHEET**

*Site name/Address:*

<i>Site name/Address:</i>	
<b>Borough:</b> Sandwell	<b>NGR:</b> SO 9857 9534
<b>Type of Work:</b> Evaluation	<b>Site Code:</b> WSWCS07
<b>Archaeological Contractor:</b> Birmingham Archaeology	<b>Date of Work:</b> March 2007
<b>Location of Finds/ Curating Museum:</b> NA/ Sandwell Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick	
<b>Title of Report:</b> The Assembly Hall, Wellcroft Street, Wednesbury: Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Evaluation	
<b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b>	
<p>Building recording revealed that the standing building essentially represents a two-phase structure, originating with a single range, gabled hall erected in 1857 by the Christian Brethren as an non-conformist assembly hall, substantially enlarged at some point between 1919 and 1936 with the addition of a second gabled range to the east.</p> <p>In the evaluation trench, modern make-up deposits were encountered to a depth of 2.00m, with some indication that ground reduction took place prior to the building up of ground levels. Natural clay was encountered directly below 19<sup>th</sup> century deposits. Cut into the natural clay in the northern part of the trench was a large feature, thought to be a ditch running southwest to northeast, filled with a homogenous reddish brown silty clay. The ditch was up to 1.00m deep and at least 2.20m wide, with the location of the northwestern side and therefore the full extent of the ditch not established. The base of the ditch was 3.00m down from the present ground surface. No dateable finds were recovered from the ditch fill.</p>	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> Malcolm Hislop	<b>Date of Summary:</b> April 2007

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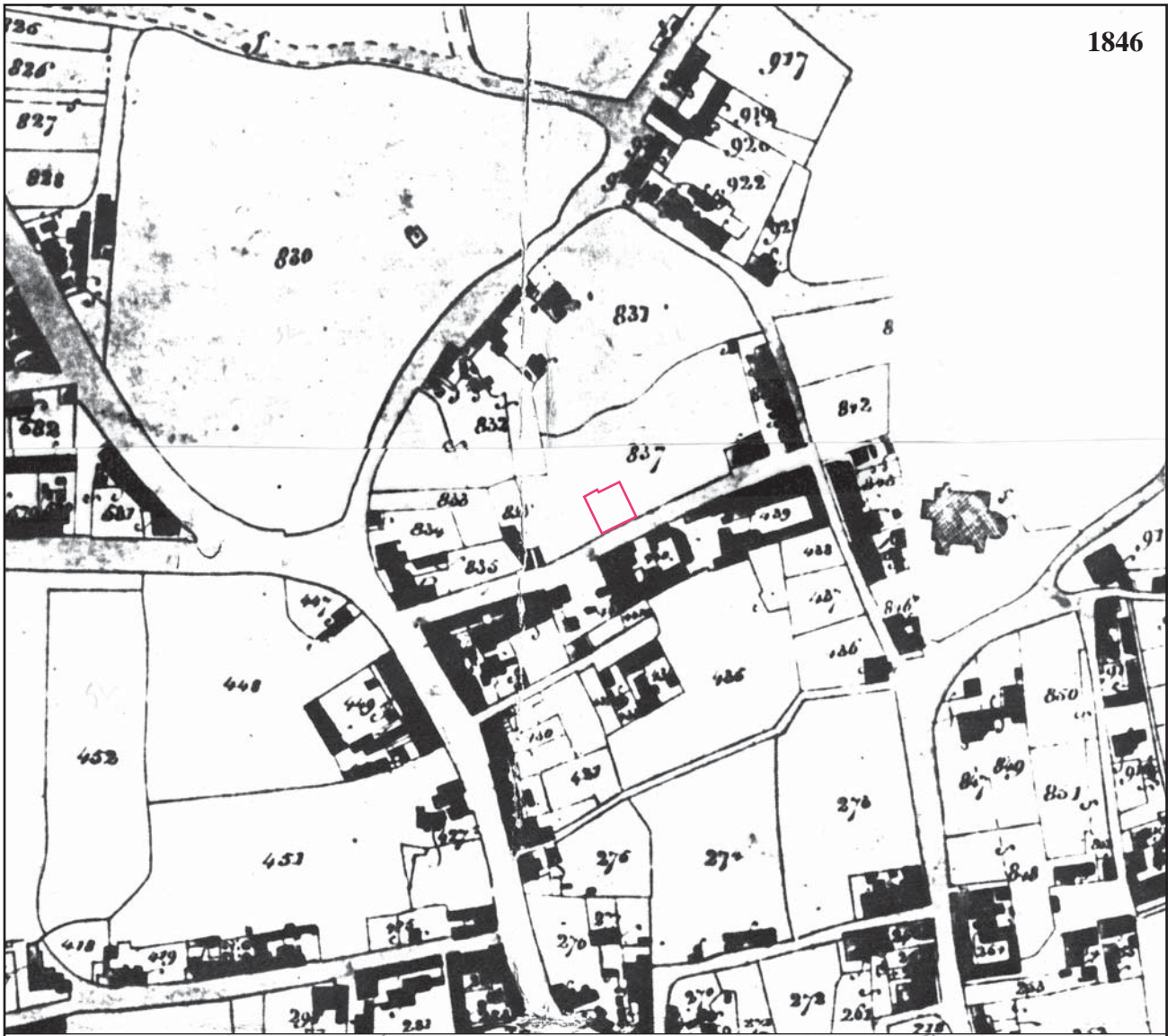
Fig.1





Fig.2





1846



1853

Fig.3



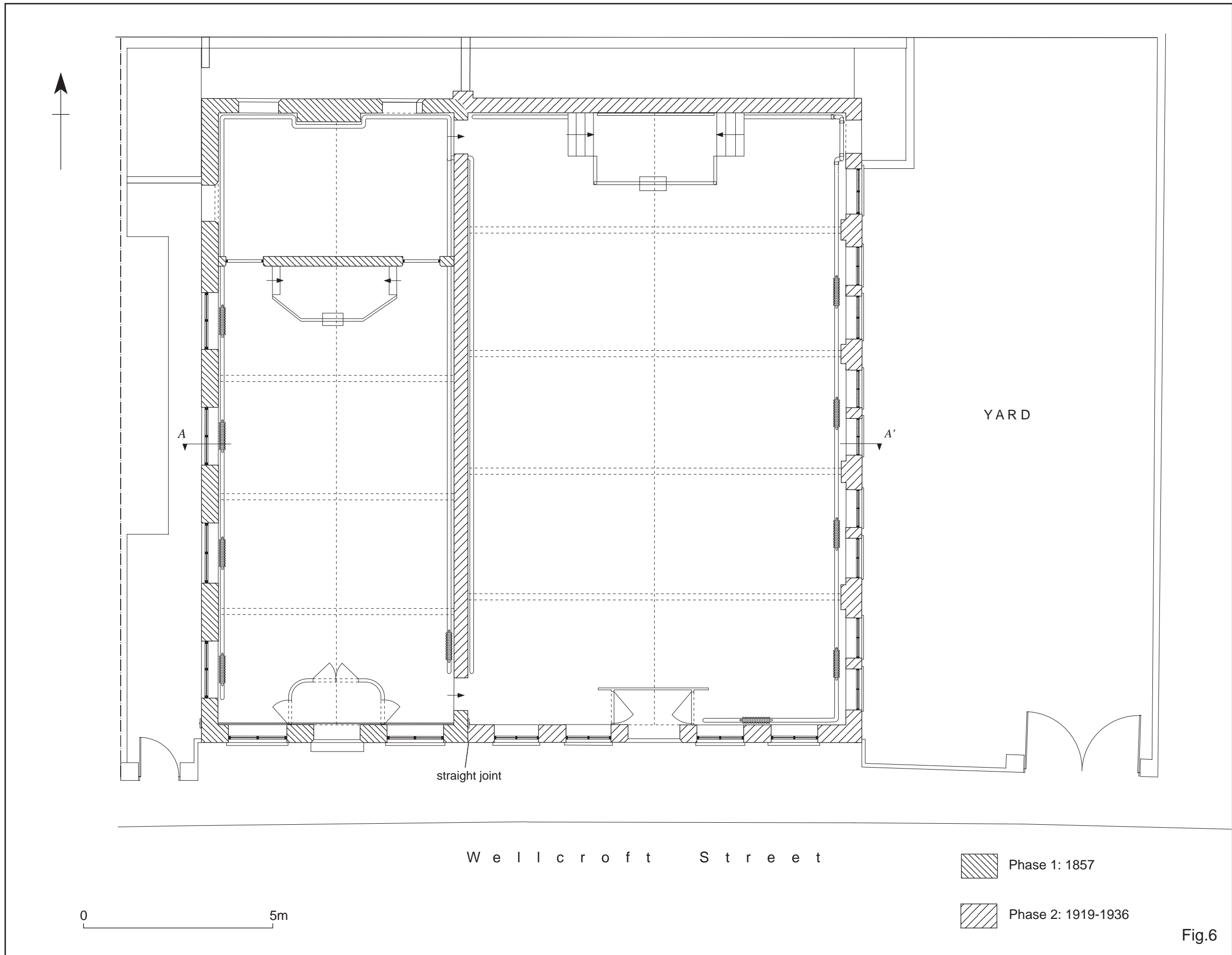


Fig.4





Fig.5



Phase 1: 1857

Phase 2: 1919-1936

Fig.6

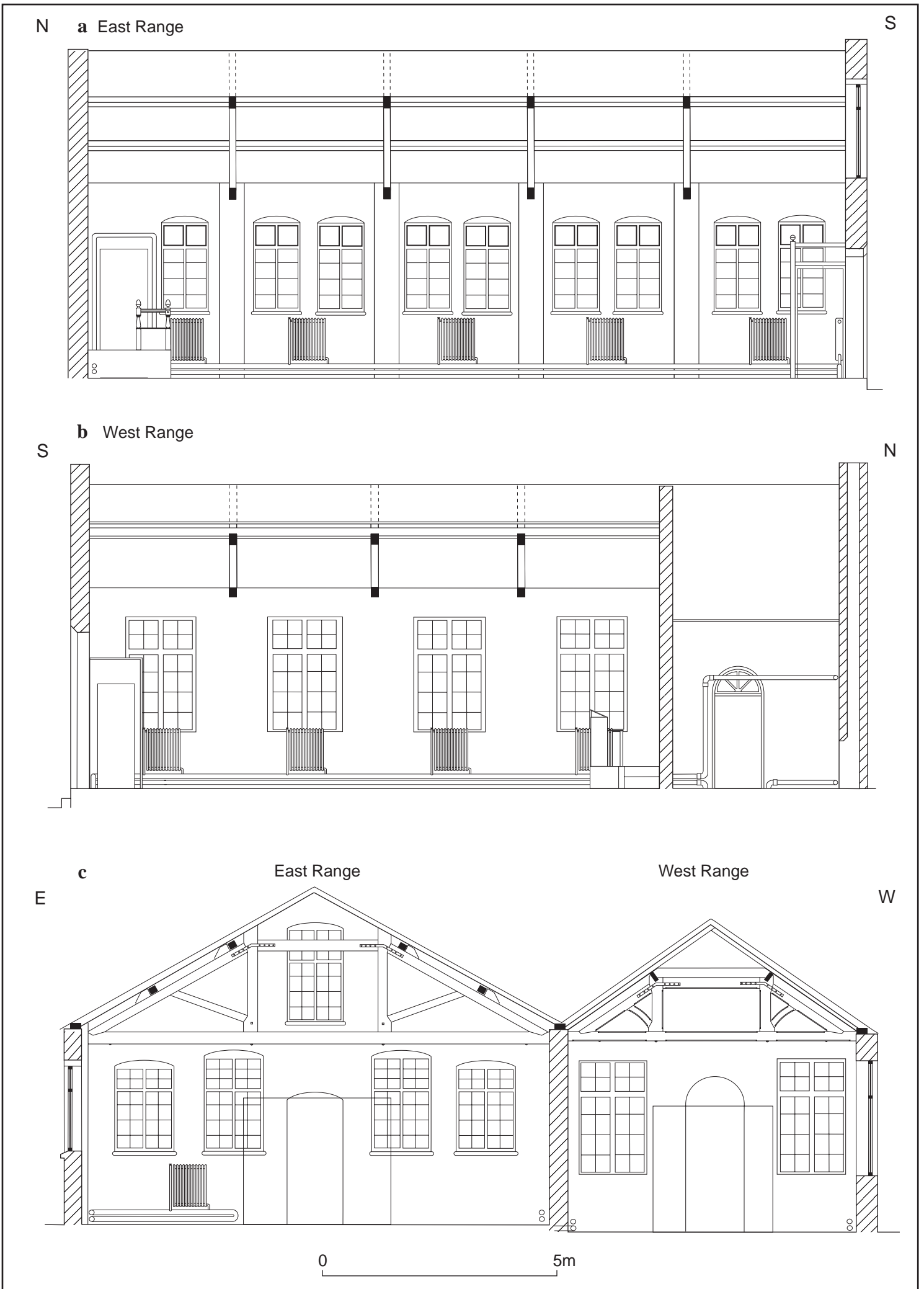


Fig.7

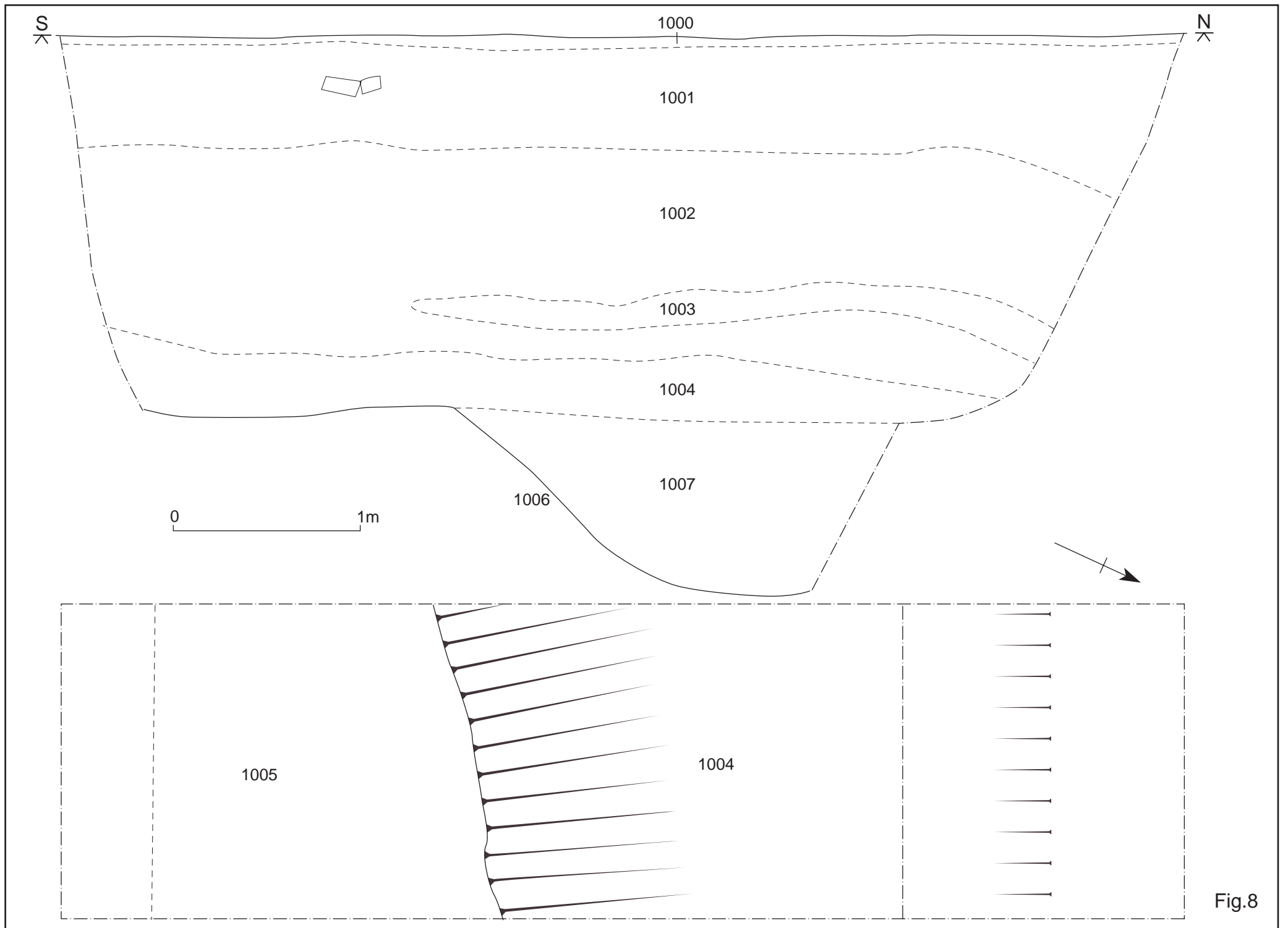


Fig.8



**Plate 1:** General exterior view from the south-west.



**Plate 2:** Detail of moulded brick eaves.



**Plate 3:** South elevation, straight joint.





**Plate 4:** East Range, east elevation from the north-east.



**Plate 5:** West Range, rear window.



**Plate 6:** West Range; door formed from window.



**Plate 7:** West Range looking north.



**Plate 8:** West Range, looking south.



**Plate 9:** West Range, door through to back room.



**Plate 10:** West Range; fenestration detail.





**Plate 11:** East Range, looking north.



**Plate 12:** East Range; detail of screening around door.



**Plate 13:** West Range; detail of fenestration.



**Plate 14:** West Range brickwork butting against endplate of tie of earlier east range.





**Plate 15:** East Range, detail of pulpit.



**Plate 16:** Historic view of Wellcroft Street looking south-west, taken from tower of St Bartholemew's Church, 1936. (Bott 2004, 21).



**Plate 17:** Composite photograph of east facing section of Trench 1





**Plate 18:** View of Trench 1 from the north-east



**Plate 19:** View of Trench 1 from the south.