

# birmingham archaeology

The Former Royal Brierley Crystal  
Works, Brierley Hill, Dudley,  
West Midlands:

An Archaeological Watching Brief,  
2005

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# **The Former Royal Brierley Crystal Works, Brierley Hill, Dudley, West Midlands: An Archaeological Watching Brief, 2005**

## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out at the site of the former Royal Brierley Crystal Works, North Street, Brierley Hill, West Midlands (NGR SO 913870). The site opened in the 1870s and continued in production until the modern day. The watching brief was aimed at enhancing the understanding of the works through supplementary recording of the standing buildings, particularly the glasshouse that was due for demolition. The watching brief revealed little that greatly enhanced the archaeological record. However, it did allow the completion of the detailed record of the glasshouse prior to its demolition.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

In July 2002 an archaeological evaluation consisting of desk-based assessment and building recording was carried out on the former Royal Brierley Crystal works by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (Hislop 2002). An addendum to the main report detailing the cave beneath the main glasshouse furnace was undertaken in December 2002 (Cherrington and Hislop 2002). The purpose of the project was to assess the impact of a proposal for partial demolition of the factory, and the conversion of part of the historic glassworks buildings to residential use. This report represents the third and final stage of the building record, and stems from the recommendations made in the main report that further work was required (Hislop 2002, 19).

## **2.0 Site Location (Figure 1)**

The former Royal Brierley Crystal works is located on North Street, Brierley Hill, Dudley, West Midlands (NGR SO913870). It occupies a triangular shaped site between the railway line to the west, North Street to the east and the North Street Industrial estate to the south.

## **3.0 Objectives**

To provide a supplementary archaeological building record of the 1870s buildings after soft-stripping had occurred, in particular the glasshouse which was due for demolition.

## **4.0 Methods**

Additions were made to existing survey drawings and textual notes made on further detail revealed by soft stripping. In addition, a 35mm format photographic survey was undertaken, using black and white and colour transparency film, of the buildings, their structural and architectural details and industrial fixtures and fittings.

The development of the rest of the 1870s phase of the works was also assessed after soft stripping had been undertaken. Recording of new structures was achieved through

photography and the compilation of textual notes.

The building recording followed the requirements set down in the *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (IFA 2001), and consisted of a supplement to a Level 3 record - as defined by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1996).

## **5.0 Historical Background**

The original works were constructed in 1870, with four later phases of construction, the most recent of which was a major modernisation and expansion of the factory premises that took place in 1949. (Fig. 2) Recording and analysis of the structures confirmed that the greater part of the 1870s buildings survive, albeit in various states of alteration. Amongst the earliest buildings surviving were the offices and the original glasshouse (Pate 1).

## **6.0 Results**

Demolition of the buildings had commenced when the site was visited. The soft-strip of the remainder of the 1870s phase of construction had all but entirely been undertaken. The demolition of the 1870s glasshouse had started but was incomplete. The majority of the internal fittings and fixtures had been stripped and the roof surface had been entirely removed leaving the internal truss structure remaining.

Little more could be ascertained during the examination of the remainder of the 1870s phase of buildings. The buildings were photographed in their present condition.

The 1870s glasshouse revealed slightly more detail to its structure than was previously established.

### **North Wall** (Fig. 3, Plate 3)

Surviving eaves detail in the western corner had a dentil pattern in blue engineering brick.

### **West Wall**

No supplementary detail.

### **East Wall**

No supplementary detail.

### **South Wall** (Fig. 4, Plate 2)

Removal of the buildings to the south had revealed remains of the twin gables above the recorded eaves level. Later concrete coping lined the top of the gable and wall. Fabric was hand-made bricks in an English Garden Wall bond.

Interior stripping revealed nothing more about the fabric of this wall.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The supplementary recording has revealed some further information about the fabric of the 1870s glass house, in particular the height and nature of the southern wall that had been previously obscured by buildings that stood to the south of the glass house.

Recording within the remainder of the 1870s phase of the works did not reveal a great deal of further information to that already ascertained.

## **8.0 Acknowledgements**

This project was managed by Malcolm Hislop who also edited this report. The recording and compilation of the report was carried out by Chris Hewitson. Nigel Dodds prepared the illustrations. Thanks are owed to the on-site staff of P.M. Harris Ltd. for their assistance, and to Peter Boland of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

## **9.0 Bibliography**

Cherrington, R. and Hislop, M. 2002 *An Archaeological Evaluation of the Former Royal Brierley Crystal Works, Brierley Hill. A Supplementary Report on Recording of the Draught Flue Systems* BUFAU Report No. 924.02

Hislop, M. 2002 *An Archaeological Evaluation of the Former Royal Brierley Crystal Works, Brierley Hill, West Midlands.* BUFAU Report No.924.

IFA 2001 *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures.*

RCHME 1996 *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn.

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- 3. Interior of former glasshouse from the south



Fig.1



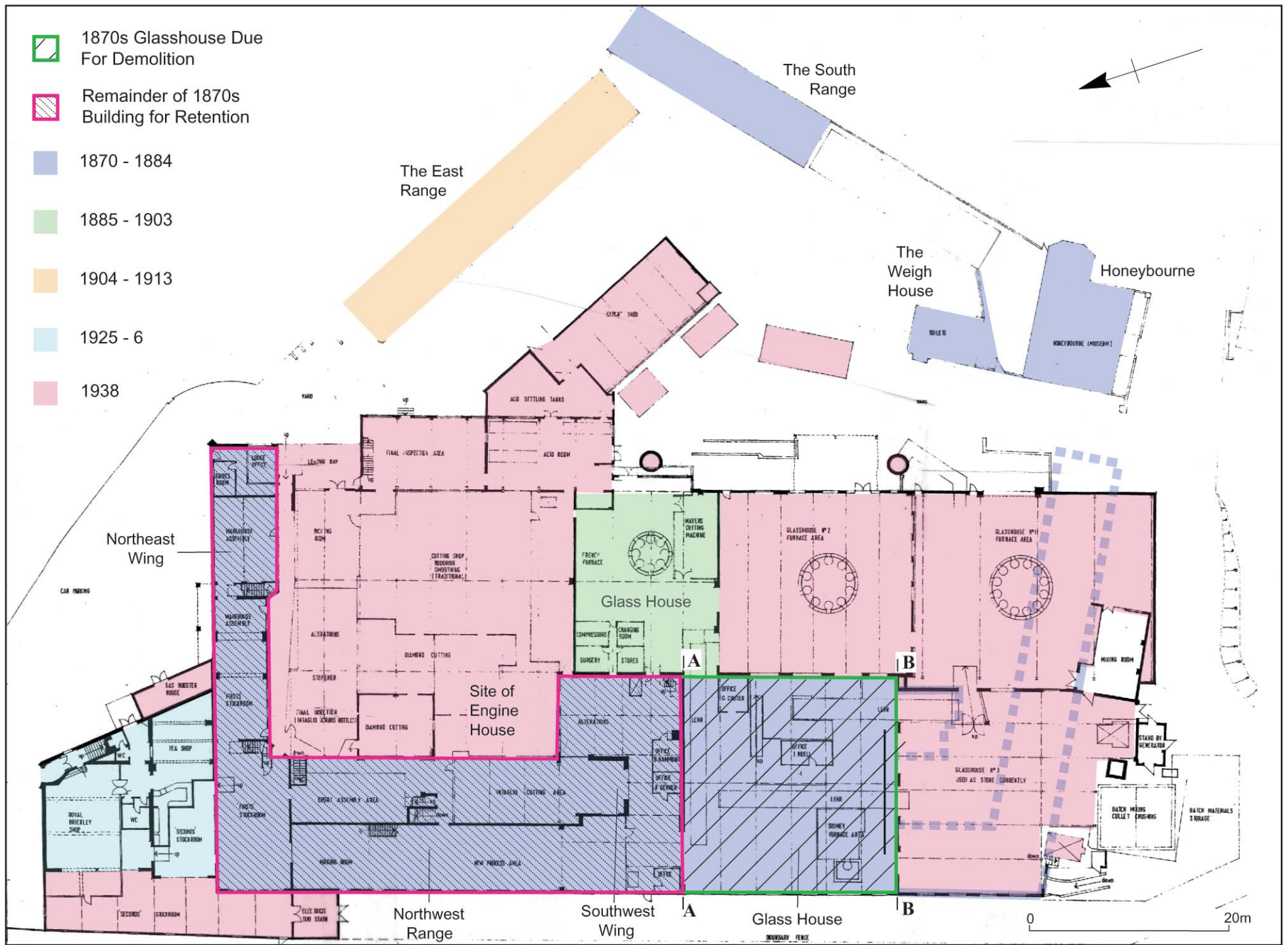


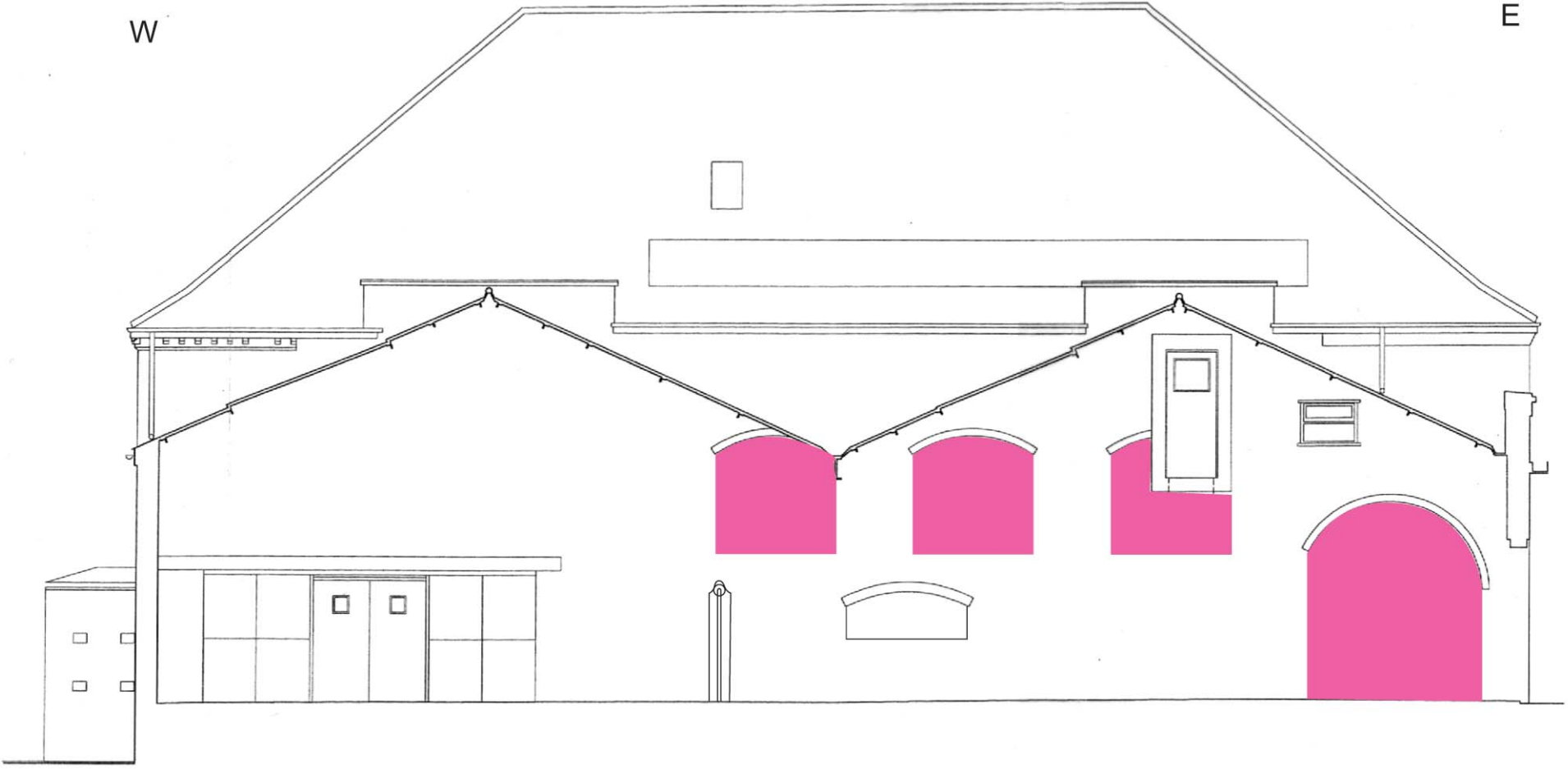
Fig.2 The Main Phases



Section A - A

W

E



Later Blockings

0

10m

Fig.3



Fig.4



Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3