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Historic Building Recording at 210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham

by
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Building Recording at 210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham

1.0 Summary

In August 2002 Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) made an archaeological record of industrial buildings at 210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham (NGR SP07898635). The work was on behalf of Bennie Gray and The Custard Factory and was carried out in advance of demolition to create a temporary car park. The buildings were late 19th century and early 20th century in date, and seem to have been additions to the Devonshire Custard Powder Works. Probably during the second quarter of the twentieth century the complex appears to have been adapted for motor distribution with the construction of a loading bay and associated doors, the construction of a garage building, and the conversion of others for the same purpose.

2.0 Introduction

In August 2002 an archaeological record was made of buildings at 210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU) for Bennie Gray and the Custard Factory. The buildings in question had been recognised as being of historic interest as a result of a desk-based assessment carried out by BUFAU in April 2002. This study identified them as representing part of the development of the Devonshire Custard Powder Works, and included a summary description and interpretation, though problems of access prevented a more detailed evaluation. Providing a more thorough archaeological record of the buildings was made a condition of planning permission for a proposal to demolish them in order to create a temporary car park.

The work was carried out according to a written scheme of investigation prepared by BUFAU (BUFAU 2002), and the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (IFA 1999).

3.0 Site Location

The proposed development site, on which the buildings are situated, covers the southwest corner of the street block formed by Floodgate Street, High Street Deritend, Gibb Street and the railway (NGR SP07898635). The site itself is bounded by High Street Deritend in the south, a bridge over the River Rea and various parts of the Custard Factory complex to the north and east, and the River Rea to the northwest.

4.0 Objectives

The objectives of the project were to obtain written and photographic records of the buildings within the proposed development area.

5.0 Method

The archaeological building record consisted of a visual inspection, written notes and structural analysis. In addition, a 35mm format photographic survey was carried out,

using monochrome and colour print films, supplemented by selected colour transparencies for presentation use. Surviving features were photographed in detail.

6.0 The Building Record

Four industrial buildings dating from the late 19th to 20th centuries were recorded within the proposed development area. One of these is 210 High Street (Plate 1), which fronts onto the street, and is aligned north-south facing south. The other three buildings lay to the north and northeast of it beyond a courtyard (Plate 2); all were aligned northeast-southwest, facing southwest. These four structures have been lettered A to D, beginning with 210 High Street and then working from east to west.

Building A

Latterly a garage, Building D (Plate 1) is an early to mid-20th-century structure. It is constructed of machine cut red brick laid in English bond, painted towards the front and rendered to the sides. It has a corrugated iron roof with roof lights. The southwest elevation, which fronts onto High Street, was largely obscured by advertising boards, at the time of the survey but it is a single-storey building with central vehicular entrance flanked by a pair of windows, all three openings being set within large recessed panels between brick pilasters which rose to a dentilled cornice with plain parapet above. The northeast side has an inserted door to the left and four boarded over windows. The interior was not accessible at the time of the survey, but had steel roof trusses.

Building B

Building B, the easternmost of the buildings to the rear of Building A, can be dated on map evidence to between 1889 and 1905 (Watt 2002, 4). The main structure (Plate 2) is built of red brick laid in English bond with blue brick coped gable and parapet, and is divided longitudinally into three separately roofed bays. It had two stories originally, and although most of the upper storey has been demolished the left hand bay retains a single small-pane cast iron frame window with segmental arch and two tiers of brick voussoirs.

In front is a lower block of buildings, of one storey on a high basement, perhaps retaining elements of structures that were here in 1889 and possibly 1855 (Watt 2002, 4). To the right is a mid-20th-century loading platform (Plate 3), with steel girder over the opening. At the back are two inserted loading doors leading to the centre and right hand (northeast) bays of the main building.

To the left, the wall is set obliquely (Plate 4), extending back to meet the main building. This section is constructed of red brick laid in English bond at basement level; between the basement and the upper window sills this is interspersed with bands of blue brick, to produce a decorative effect, and above that red brick in English garden wall bond. There is a double door to the right at basement level and a wooden-framed window in the centre, both openings are enlarged and with reconstituted stone lintels. At mezzanine level to the left is a small-pane iron-framed window with similar lintel, but it has been reset within a later brick reconstruction phase. There are two

wood-framed windows to the upper storey, both six-light casements with square heads and blue-brick sills.

Inside, the bays of the main building are divided by cast-iron columns and a central brick pier with rounded corners. These 4-bay arcades support steel girders on which are carried the ends of the roof trusses. Only the southwest bay retains its four-bay asymmetrical roof (Plate 5), in which the northwest (left) side is of much steeper pitch. The frames are modified king-post trusses, with one of the principals extending over the top of the quasi-king post to meet a third principal at the off-centre ridge. The whole of the northwest side of the roof is glazed. In the northwest elevation of the northeast bay is a vehicular entrance to the former Devonshire Works.

Building C

Building C (Plate 6) adjoins Building B, to the northwest and is of similar date. It is constructed of red brick laid in English bond, partly painted, and has a corrugated-iron roof with blue, bull-nose brick coped verges. Building C is a single-storey structure, four roof bays in length. Like Building B it has an asymmetrical roof line. The southwest front has a large inserted vehicular entrance to the centre with steel-framed double doors, a blocked door to the right, and in the gable a circular oculus.

At the time of the survey this building contained a free standing safe with a brass plate inscribed 'F. Whitfield & Co / SAFE & DOOR MANUFACTURERS/ BIRMINGHAM'. The roof trusses (Plate 7) are similar in character to those of Building B, and the northwest side of the roof is also glazed.

Building D

Early 20th century in date, being built some time after 1905, Building D (Plate 8) is a single-storey structure made of machine cut red brick laid in English bond, and has a partially glazed corrugated-iron roof with brick coped parapets. The gabled southwest front is dominated by a vehicle entrance; a change in the character of the brickwork on either side indicates that it is a later insertion. The opening was formerly closed by a sliding door, the rail for which survived at the time of the survey though the door itself was detached and lying on the ground. At the left-hand corner of the building (Plate 9) is brickwork of different character, being a mixture of dark blue bricks and darker red bricks; there is also a vertical building break with the main body of the building. There is a second vertical break just around the corner on the northwest elevation, suggesting that the angle has been rebuilt. Slightly further to the northeast the wall steps outwards. Interpretation is difficult, but it is possible that the whole of the southwest front is an addition. At the opposite (south) corner is another straight joint between the buttress of the main building and a lean-to annexe, possibly an office, containing a boarded up window with projecting bull-nose blue-brick sill, and wood lintel.

Inside, the northwest elevation incorporates a series of brick buttresses, though these do not correspond with the roof trusses. This wall also carries a steel wallplate, though neither of these features are present on the southeast side. In the east corner, though structurally independent of the building itself, is a square chimney stack (Plate 10), with blocked, round headed stoke hole in the northwest side, and above it at a height

of about 2.75m above the floor a steel door (Plate 11). Between the chimney and the southwest wall at a height of approximately 3m above floor level is a framework of steel girders (Plate 12), one of which has a pulley attached to it. It probably served as a hoist. The roof is carried on steel roof trusses. The south-westernmost of these is different from the others, having the same pattern but being constructed of plate rather than rods.

7.0 Discussion

Three main phases can be readily discerned from this examination of structures at 210 High Street, Deritend. The earliest of these dates from between 1889 and 1905, though it may incorporate some earlier 19th-century remains, and comprises buildings B and C. The original purpose of these structures remains obscure, though they presumably formed workshops of some kind.

The second phase belongs to the first quarter of the 20th century and is represented by Building D. The chimney within Building D may be indicative of foundry activity, and the pulley on the gantry next to it suggests that heavy objects were being manoeuvred.

Phase three belongs to the mid-20th century and suggests that the site was adapted to motor distribution at this time, in connection with the Devonshire Works. Building B was converted into a despatch warehouse by the insertion of loading doors and the construction of the loading bay. Building A seems to have been custom built as a garage connected with this activity whereas Building C and Building D were converted for a similar purpose by the insertion of vehicular entrances.

8.0 Acknowledgements

Malcolm Hislop carried out the building recording and wrote this report, which was edited by Steve Litherland. The photographs were prepared by John Halsted.

9.0 References

BUFAU 2002. *210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham: Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation.*

IFA 1999. *Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures.*

Watt, S. 2002. *The Custard Factory/210 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham City Centre: An Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (BUFAU Report No. 908).

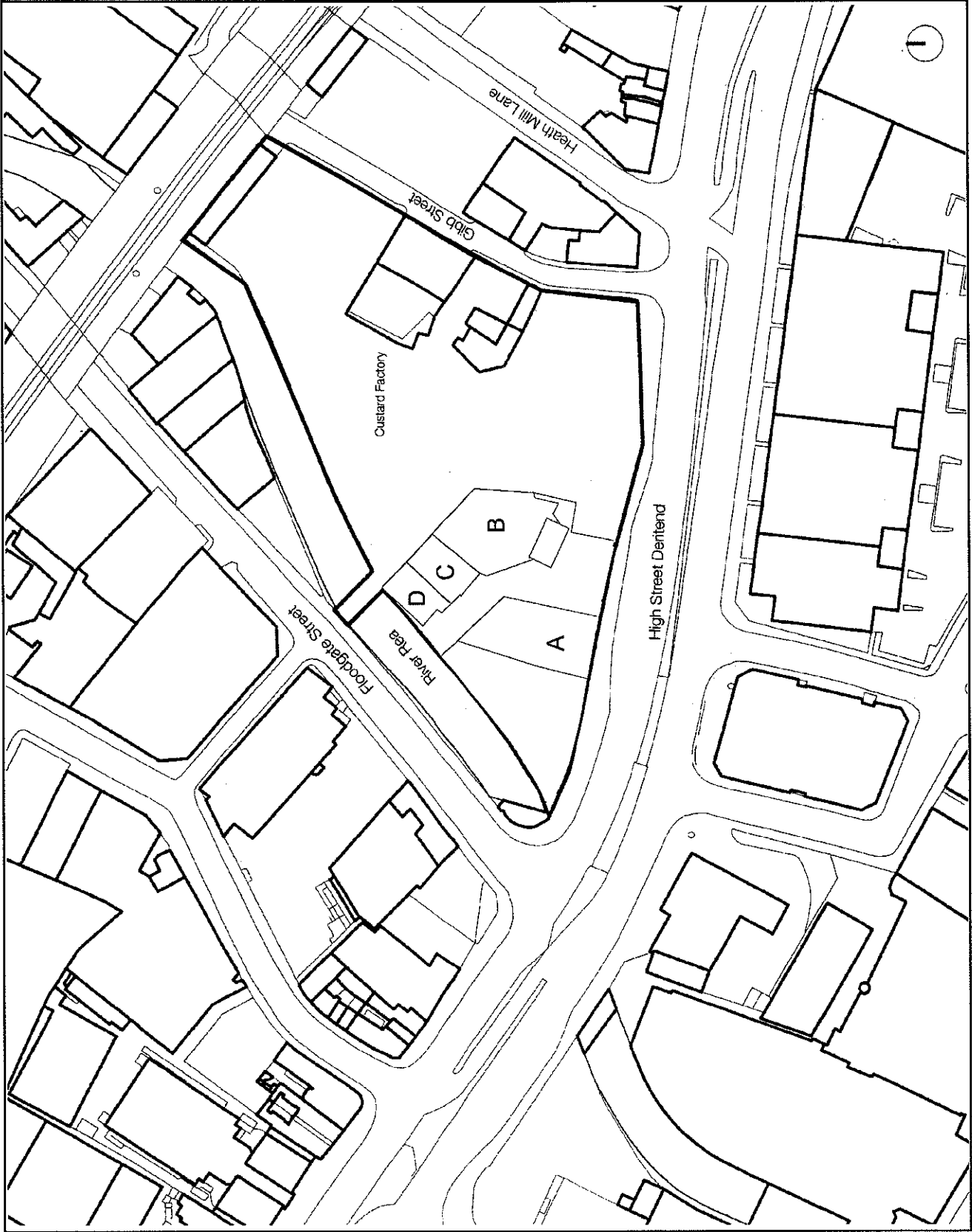


Fig. 1



Plate 1. Building A from the south

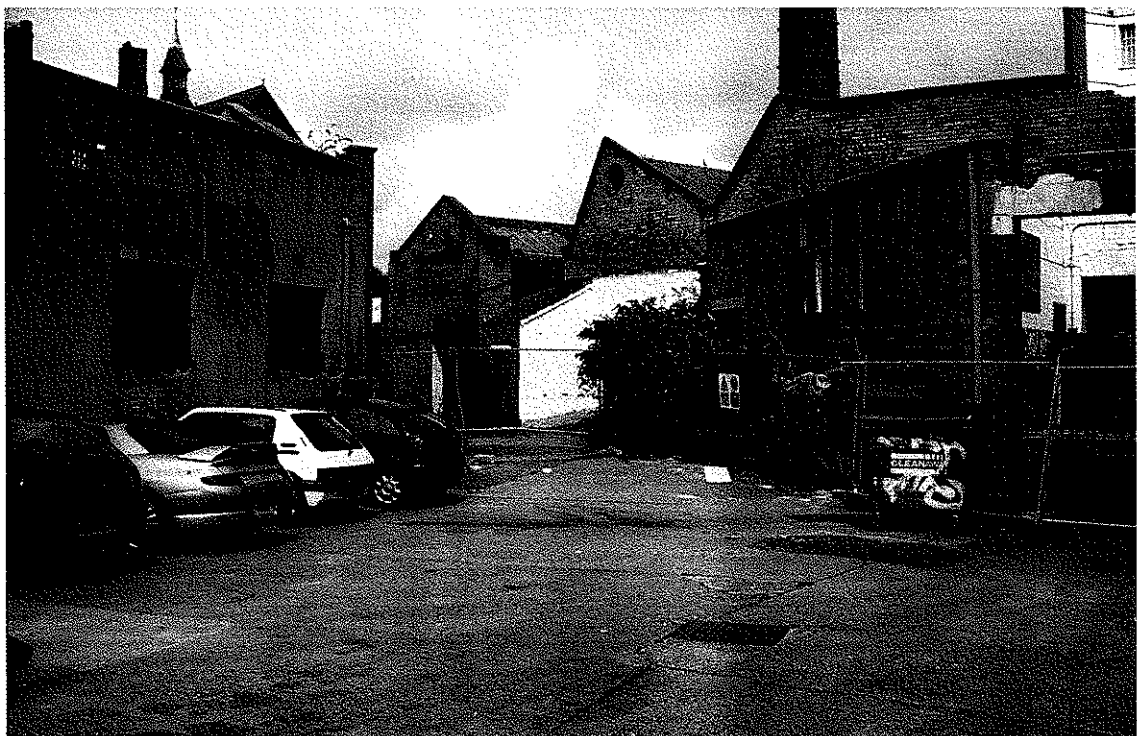


Plate 2. General view from the southeast

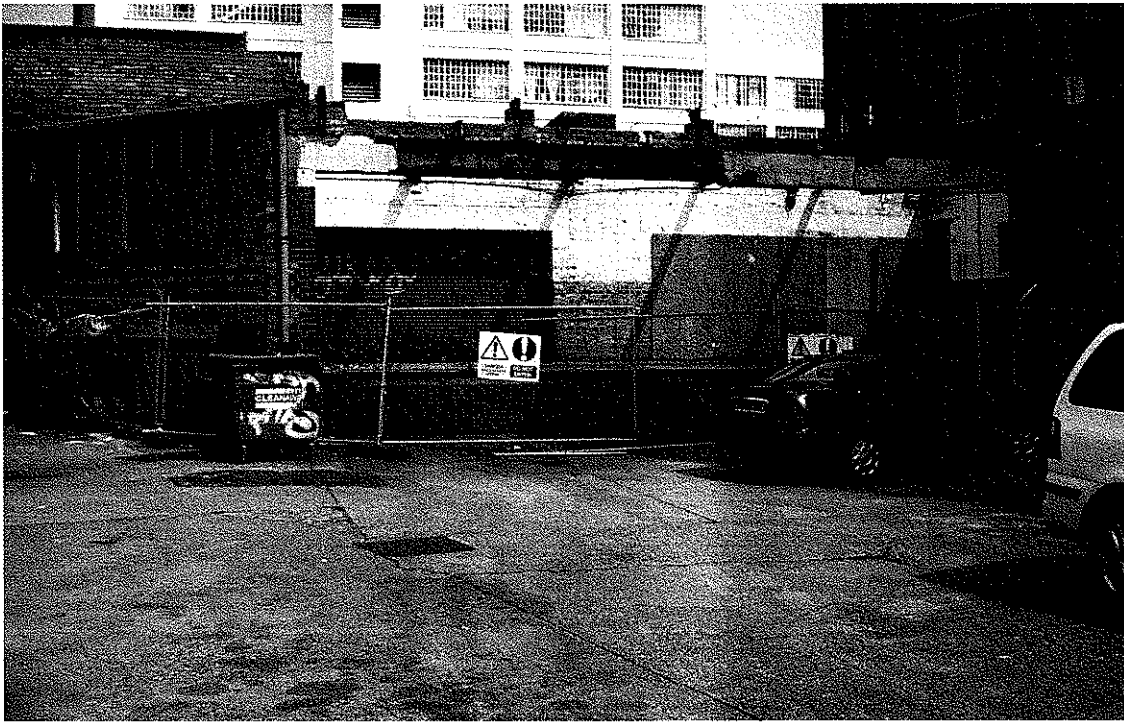


Plate 3. Building B: the loading bay from the southwest



Plate 4. Building B from the southwest

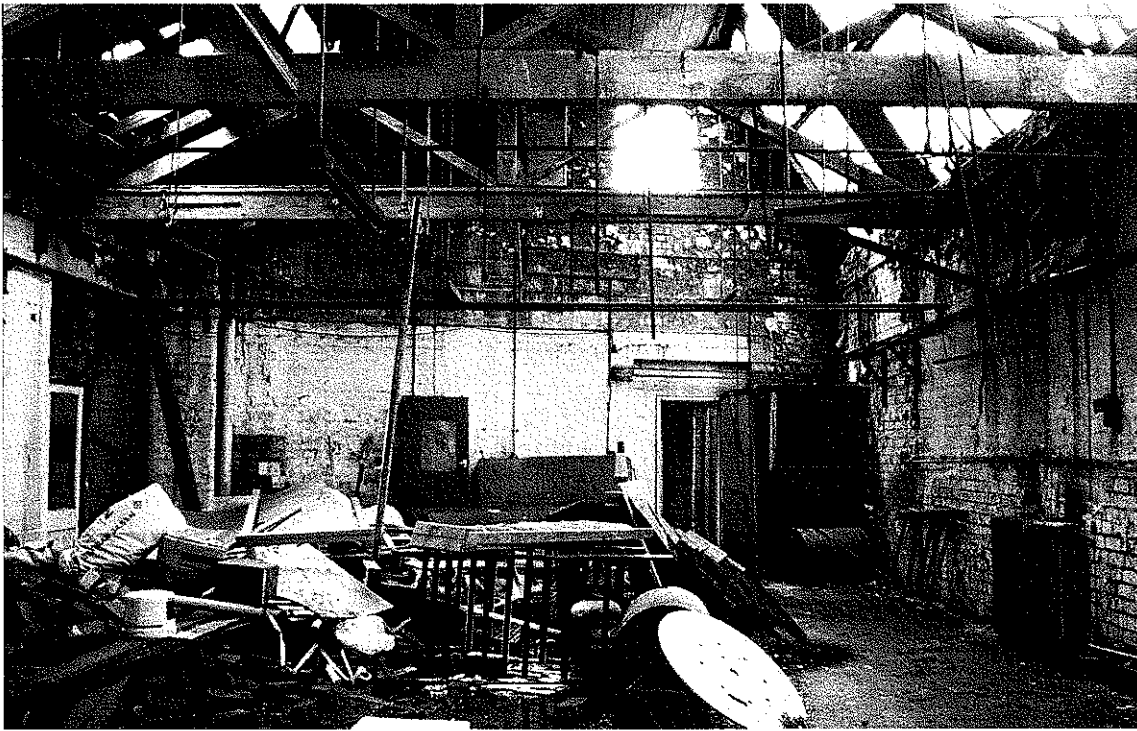


Plate 5. Building B interior from the northeast



Plate 6. Building C from the southeast



Plate 7. Building C the roof from the southwest



Plate 8. Building D from the southeast



Plate 9. Building D the west corner



Plate 10. Building D interior from the southwest



Plate 11. Building D the chimney from the west



Plate 12. Building D steel framework from the southwest