



Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building recording at Yew Tree House and Yew Tree Cottage Biddulph, Staffordshire



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QUALITY CONTROL

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OASIS REPORT FORM

PROJECT DETAILS	
Project title	Archaeological buildings recording at Yew Tree House and Yew Tree Cottage, Biddulph, Staffordshire
Short description	Building recording has shown that Yew Tree House and Yew Tree Cottage originate in the first half of the 19th century. They had reached almost their maximum extent in the third quarter of that century. Neither property retained much historic character and all interiors had been extensively remodelled in the last 40 years. Yew Tree House seems always to have had related workshops to the rear, which may have served a long-lived haulage business.
Project type	Level II Building record
Previous work	None
Future work	Consecutive watching brief
Monument type and period	Later post-medieval buildings, not statutorily listed
PROJECT LOCATION	
County	Staffordshire
Site address	Yew Tree House and Yew Tree Cottage, Wharf Road, Biddulph
Easting	388240
Northing	357740
PROJECT CREATORS	
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Project brief originator	Staffordshire County Council
Project Design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology
Director/Supervisor	
Project Manager	Iain Soden
Sponsor or funding body	Pam Brown Associates
PROJECT DATE	
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End date	December 2009
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING AT
YEW TREE HOUSE AND YEW TREE COTTAGE
BIDDULPH, STAFFORDSHIRE
DECEMBER 2009**

Abstract

Building recording has shown that Yew Tree House and Yew Tree Cottage originate in the first half of the 19th century. Neither property retained much historic character and all interiors had been extensively remodelled in the last 40 years. Yew Tree House seems always to have had related workshops to the rear, which may have served a long-lived haulage business. The properties had reached almost their maximum extent in the third quarter of that century.

1 INTRODUCTION

Pam Brown Associates, acting on behalf of clients, are handling the clearance for redevelopment of a former industrial site adjacent to Wharf Road, Biddulph, Staffordshire (NGR: 388240 35740; Fig 1). The site contained the empty and derelict premises of Yew Tree House and the neighbouring Yew Tree cottage, both of which were set slightly back from the historic and present frontage of Wharf Road. Neither building was statutorily listed but both were identified in a foregoing desk-based archaeological assessment as historic properties which may have been connected with the coal mining industry. A mine formerly stood close by, on and around the proposed development site (Rogers 2008).

Accordingly it was recommended that the planning authority, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council attach a condition to the planning consent, to ensure that the buildings were satisfactorily recorded prior to their demolition. The scope of the requirement, amounting to Level 2 of the English Heritage procedural document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good practice* (2006), was set down in a written Brief for Archaeological Buildings Recording by Steve Dean, County Archaeological Officer of Staffordshire County Council and advisor to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The work was carried out by Northamptonshire Archaeology in accordance with the brief, a written archaeological specification and agreements formulated on site during monitoring by Mr Dean.

Property status

The properties were not listed, nor did they enjoy any statutory protection or special status. Both were derelict and boarded up at the time of recording.

2 PREVIOUS RESEARCH FROM HISTORIC MAPS

2.1 1841 Inclosure Map

The property may be a house shown on the Inclosure Map of 1841, when a variety of individual buildings were depicted (Rogers 2008 fig 3), However their identification is uncertain.

2.2 1876-87 Ordnance Survey, 1st edition, 1:2500

This first, properly surveyed map shows that both buildings had reached much of the extent which survived to be recorded in 2009, with only minor additions. An almost contemporary published Ordnance Survey Map of 1889 confirms this (Rogers 2008, fig 4).

2.3 1925 Ordnance Survey, 3rd edition, 1:2500

This enhanced re-survey version shows the building in detail and confirms the layout shown in the earlier Ordnance Survey editions. But for small additions, both buildings were of the basic plan which survived to recording in 2009 (Rogers 2008 fig 6).

2.4 1946 Ordnance Survey, 3rd edition, 1:2500

The first post-war resurvey is of inferior pictorial quality and is less reliable than the 1925 predecessor. No additions appear to have been made and the properties appear unchanged from 1925 (Rogers 2008, fig 7).

3 METHODOLOGY

The property was comprehensively investigated over two days for architectural and historically notable aspects which were photographed digitally and using Black and White print for archive purposes, the two producing a total of 95 + x images. They were all generated using Nikon SLR equipment with dedicated lenses of 17-35mm wide-angle capability. The use of wide angle facilitated the recording of small room-spaces and a particularly inaccessible alleyway. During both visits a simple ground floor plan was generated at a scale of 1:100 for Yew Tree House and 1:50 for Yew Tree Cottage, both of which were then annotated and provisionally phased while still on site.

In the absence of certainty in terms of past room uses or attributes, the rooms in each property are known simply by a number and their final use where known. It was agreed on site, when all parties could see the total absence of any pre-modern features or interiors on the first floor, that no recording need be carried out at this level, other than taking a few general photographs. All of what follows, therefore, relates entirely to the ground floor of both properties.

The standard of recording equates to at least Level II as defined by English Heritage in their procedural document '*Recording historic buildings: a descriptive specification*' (2006). All rooms were accessed, but the first floors in both properties were found to be of entirely modern layouts and thus recording was curtailed. The weather was fine and dry for most of the recording, but low (or no) lighting in interiors meant that extensive use was made of dedicated electronic flash.

4 RESULTS

4.1 The original Yew Tree House (Fig 2)

The earliest extant building appears to be constructed of coursed or roughly-coursed local limestone and brick beneath a slate roof and comprised a simple, two-cell cottage which at the time of recording formed the front entrance spaces of a recently-vacated hardware shop (G1 and G2; Fig 3). All former division between the two rooms had been removed (Fig 4). A difference in the interior proportions of these rooms suggests that formerly stairs may have lain at the back of G1. Neither room contained any historic features, the whole having been ripped out to form the sales-space, although there was evidence that both rooms were once heated by a fireplace in each of the gable ends, in the form of corbels inserted to support bedroom fireplaces above. At first floor level the forward-facing windows had original stone drip-mouldings above them.

4.2 A second property

It seems that that at about the same time or a while after, a second property was constructed to the north-east, hereafter referred to as the north-eastern property (Fig 5). This appears to have consisted of a building with an L-shaped plan, which at the time of recording was fitted out as parts of two separate homes. No interior historic fixtures or fittings survived; all the interiors here were modern (G3, G4, G5 and G6). Of note, however are the ornamented exterior bargeboards on the gable end above G4, which are unlikely to post-date the Victorian period. It also had a single chimney at the centre of the ensemble, in the east wall of G6. This building is felt, therefore, to be of 19th century origin. It had been extended and split in recent times to become parts of two domestic dwellings, G3, G4 and G5 going together, with G6 being allied to spaces of another dwelling further south-west.

4.3 Extending the property

Behind G1 and G2 was built the first of a number of extensions (G7 and G8). Their addition may have taken place in such a way as to leave the functioning of G1 and G2 almost unaffected since the new work comprised a similar, but larger pair of rooms with their own free-standing gables, simply added eaves-to eaves, with an awkward roof-valley thus running between them (Fig 6). In room G7 lay the only historic features noted anywhere in the property, comprising neatly-slotted in cupboards either side of the south-western gable fireplace (Fig 7). To the rear was an arch with some decorative plaster consoles or brackets (Figs 7 and 8). The entire room also contained a relatively

ornate plaster cornice. Together these might suggest a higher status to the room, which may be part of a dwelling-extension coeval with the conversion of the frontage into a shop. The counterpart rear room G8 contained nothing of historic fabric, having been entirely gutted to form a bathroom showroom.

4.4 Expansion to join the properties

The abovementioned showroom function which took in the first extension of G7 and G8, was in fact twice as large as both of those rooms, incorporating also room G9. This doubled as a store and was two-storeyed, of brick but lined on the inside with block-work and beneath an asphalt flat roof (Fig 9). The flat roof may have been a later alteration, since it appears stylistically in keeping only with the 1970s or 1980s outfitting of the interiors and little else, but structurally this was unclear. To the north-west once looked four windows on either side of the northern rear doorway. These were subsequently blocked. This huge space was otherwise featureless. Possibly contemporary was a store to the north-east (G10) with a WC at one end. This appears to have once framed a large doorway in the east wall, later blocked and the first floor was accessed by an external flight of stairs, still in use since the first floor had been converted into a self-contained dwelling independent of the shop below (Fig 10). At the entrance to the first floor was a single window of perhaps c1900, with a round-arched head and both etched and stained glass (Fig 11).

In the angle between the G9/G8 showroom/storeroom and the store G10, the space between the two elements of the buildings was infilled to form a two-storey extension which linked and expanded the L-shaped house adjacent to the shop (Fig 2). Single ownership might be inferred from this point on. At ground floor level, the new room (G11) later became the dining room of a property which was eventually successfully split from the rest of the L-shaped building to form two flats or apartments, dividing the former L-shaped dwelling into two on the east side of G6. This was effected by the extension of G5 north-east to form an outshut, demolishing the former north-east corner (Fig 12). None of these extensions contained historic features. The two flats or apartments had been fully re-fitted in the 1970s or early 1980s. Subsequent break-ins had wrecked the interiors in search of valuable raw materials such as copper central heating pipes.

4.5 Ancillary buildings

At some point, whether still individual or conjoined, a range of two industrial buildings was constructed to the rear of the two properties. The first of these was a workshop (Fig 2, G12; Fig 13) which may have included a kitchen or laundry behind G9, on the far side of a small yard (G13). This building (G12, G12a) was of three bays, and had a (modern) translucent perspex single-fall roof covering all three, but its eastern bay was probably once separate (shown by a foundation-scar on floor), and was heated by a large fireplace with a platform adjacent. This may have been flanked by a former copper which often occupied such a location adjacent to the fireplace, a the location marked only by a sudden unevenness of the floor screed. On the north side was a single Yorkshire sash window, the only window anywhere on the site which predated the 1950s and which may have been as early as c1900. The entire embrasure was bricked up from the inside, but the window frame had been left fully *in situ* in the narrow alleyway behind (Fig 14). A

second, former opening directly opposite this within G12 once looked into the yard (Fig 15).

The eastern end of the range consisted of a second ancillary building of five unequal bays (G14; Fig 16). At each end stood a small chimney, which on the west had hacked into the back of the fireplace in G12a and borrowed its chimney stack. A series of windows in wide niches punctuated the south wall. The whole building was formerly used as a garage but the proportions and layout are redolent of a stable-block (Fig 17). Further, modern garage workshops open out off its northern side at the east end (beyond the area of recording).

4.6 An assortment of additions

To the far south west corner of the whole complex, probably at around c1900 or soon after, was added a multangular smooth-faced brick structure under a slate roof (G15; Fig 18). It is the only building in the entire ensemble not to have been rendered. It originally connected with the interior of G7 via a doorway, but this was later blocked up. It formerly had a single window facing north-west and a fireplace in the south-west angle. It seems to have served as a watch-office, probably relating to the former haulage business which worked out of the yards and sheds behind the complex; it still contained numerous keys on the wall. Its interior had been fully stripped of any historic features and was boarded out.

Of similar brick construction was a single WC added to the outside of store G12 (G16).

On the west side of the buildings was a long low building with a distinctive forty-five degree angle at its northern end (G17; Fig 9). This may be of the 1930s although very little of its brick was visible under a 90-percent modern render. A former doorway had been blocked in its west wall using Staffordshire blue engineering bricks. The interior comprised a modern office, store, kitchen and WC (Fig 19).

The construction of this low block cut off the western end of what had been a long, narrow yard. The construction of G18, an extension to the eastern house, to form a single-storey, flat-roofed entrance and kitchen on the north-west side of G11, also allowed the full functioning of the eastern property as two separate flats (Fig 20 at centre). Its construction entailed the blocking of the south window in G12a, while the row of windows in G9 were also blocked and the former yard was roofed over to form a store. This meant that all spaces from the frontage back to G12 were linked under cover.

4.7 Yew Tree Cottage (Fig 21)

Yew Tree Cottage stood a short distance from its larger neighbour and was always separate (Fig 22). It seems to have begun life as a brick building, T-shaped in plan, which downstairs comprised four rooms. All survived as simple spaces but not without total interior reworking, so that no historic features, fixtures or décor had survived. Upstairs two bedrooms and a bathroom, probably in their original layout, were similarly

devoid of historic features. In fact the only 'character feature' comprised a faux- or mock-Victorian fireplace surround in the kitchen proper (G2; Fig 23).

The house was entered through a kitchen annexe (G1) which led into the kitchen (G2). Off this lay a large Dining Room with fireplace in the end gable wall, which was accessed under a flight of centrally-placed stairs. Off the dining room, and through an ornamental arch was the Sitting Room (G4), which again was provided with a fireplace in its end wall. A decorative display niche stood in the wall opposite. A large walk-in cupboard was under construction between this room and the kitchen annexe at the time of the property's dereliction.

The building had been extended by the addition of a single-storey outshut on the north-west (G5; Fig 24). Originally lit by two windows, one of these had subsequently been blocked.

The entrance to the building on the south-west side, had originally been by a large porch with a pitched roof of its own. This had been demolished leaving reduced foundations at ground level and a roof scar above the doorway to the kitchen annexe. It was, however, being replaced by a smaller brick porch which was still unfinished at the time of the building's dereliction (Fig 25).

While the doorway through the porch was at the time of recording the only way into the building, above it cracked render and a canopy scar in the front angle of the building's gables denote the former presence of a front entrance (Fig 26)

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Yew Tree House

This was an organic agglomeration of buildings, extensions and re-builds which saw two properties become one and then split into three in plan, with a fourth on first-floor level only. While the original buildings were probably all dwellings, constructed, on map evidence, by the third quarter of the 19th-century, the principal front of Yew Tree House may have become a shop as early as 1900. At about that time the rear buildings also began to serve a haulage business behind. This first may originally have been based around horse-drawn traffic but then converted to motor-transport (much debris, spares and mechanical servicing books etc, in the sheds behind attest to its presence throughout the 1940s-80s). These sheds were not the subject of any recording.

Above the shop, the first floor functioned as a separate dwelling, privately accessed via the stairs at the front of G10. There was no physical link apparent from the ground to first floor in this portion of the property, suggesting total independence of shop and flat above.

The adjacent portion of the house (G4-G6) grew from a compact core to become a relatively sprawling home, later split into two and supplied with the necessary separate entrances and utilities to function as two homes. Again these were totally separate from the shop next door.

The ancillary buildings seem to have served the haulage business throughout and span the change from horse-drawn traffic to motor vehicles.

5.2 Yew Tree Cottage

Yew Tree Cottage, by comparison with its neighbour, never required or was never afforded an opportunity to grow and it remained a small detached home which was gradually updated and altered to suit single-family occupation.

5.3 Overall

The complex of Yew Tree House and its neighbour Yew Tree Cottage were mostly built by the third quarter of the 19th-century when they were first reliably mapped. There were subsequent additions of the 20th century. The properties contained few early fixtures and fittings and had been totally overhauled in the last 40 years or so. Basic phasing of the buildings has been possible in the building recording but there was little of any historic character left of any interiors.

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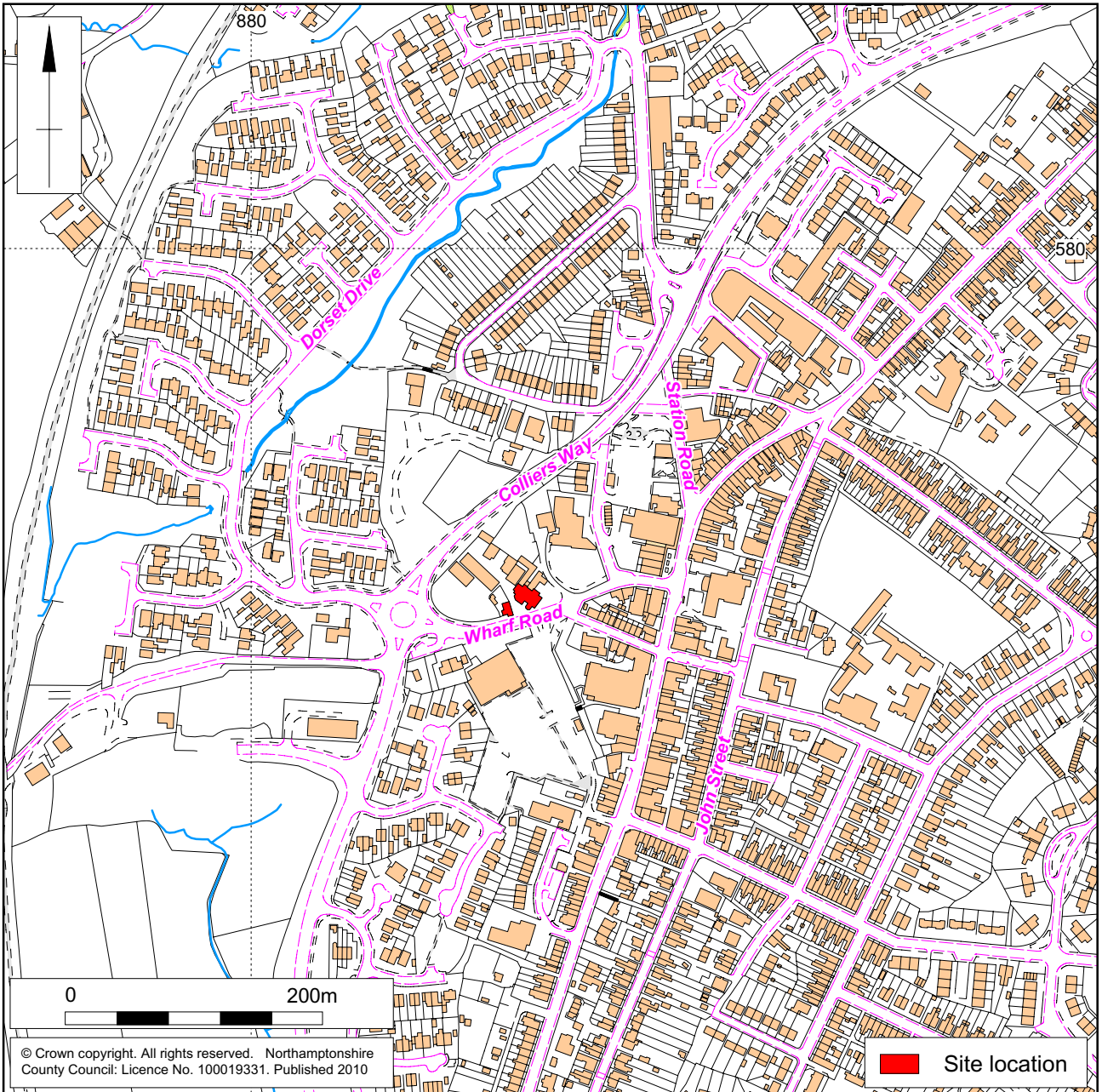
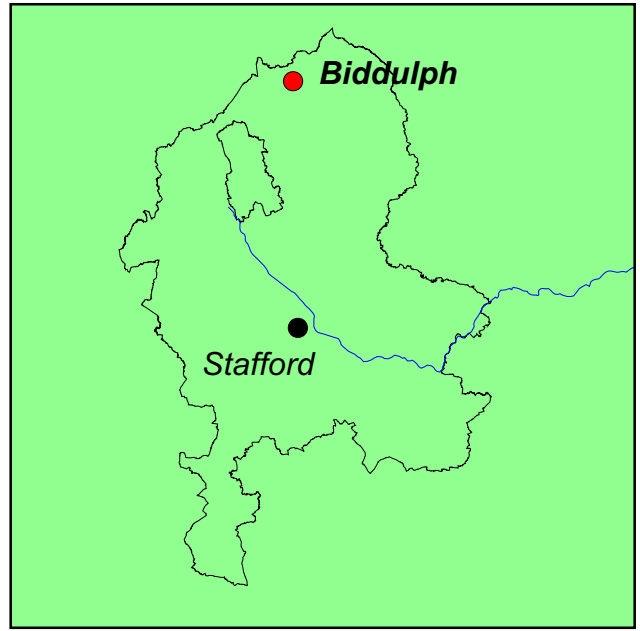
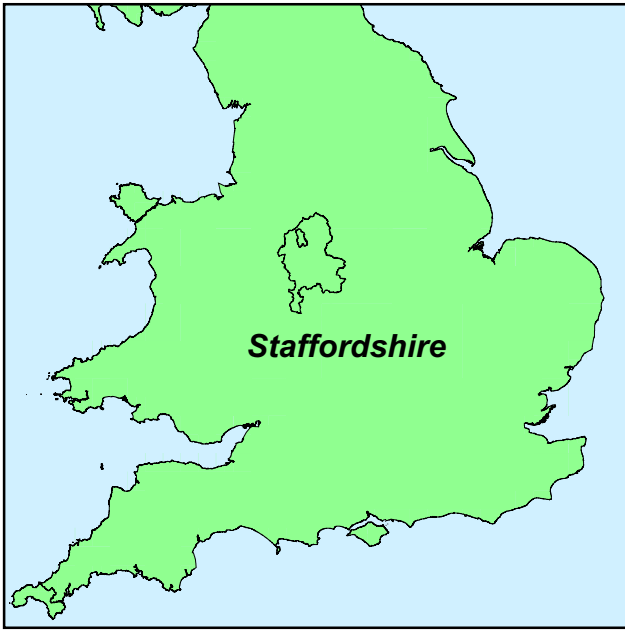
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Web pages

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1:5000

Site Location Fig 1



0011 The Wharf Road frontage of Yew Tree House Fig 3



0053 The former shop interior Fig 4



0012 The domestic front of Yew Tree House Fig 5



0007 Side view of Yew Tree House Fig 6



0089 Cupboard window and decorative plasterwork in Best Room G7 Fig 7



0056 Detail of plaster console bracket and cornice in G7 Fig 8



0046 Office G17 and workshop G12 from rear yard Fig 9



0013 Stair to upper floor flat Fig 10



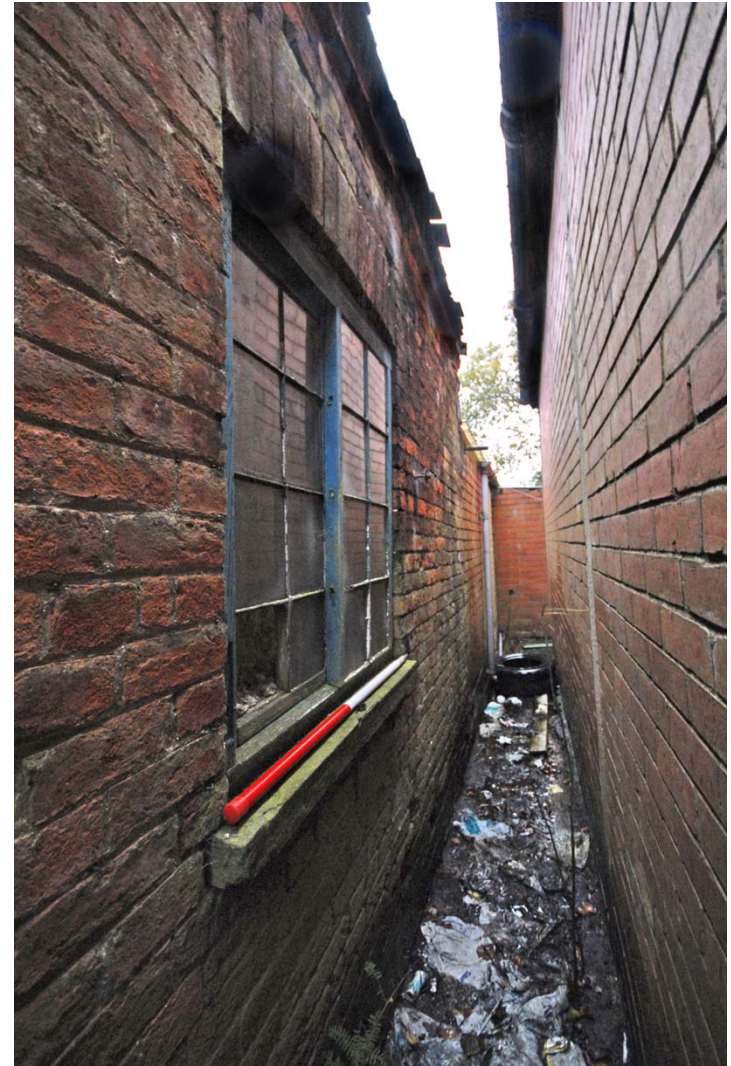
0040 Late Victorian window at top of stairs Fig 11



0016 Outshut to form kitchen G5 Fig 12



0058 View along workshop G12 (foreground) and 12a (background) Fig 15



0093 Yorkshire sash window in alleyway, blocked from inside Fig 14



0090 Location of possible former copper in G12a, blocked window...



0019 Workshops G14 exterior from east Fig 16



0024 Workshops G14, interior Fig 17



0050 Multiangular watch-office G15 Fig 18



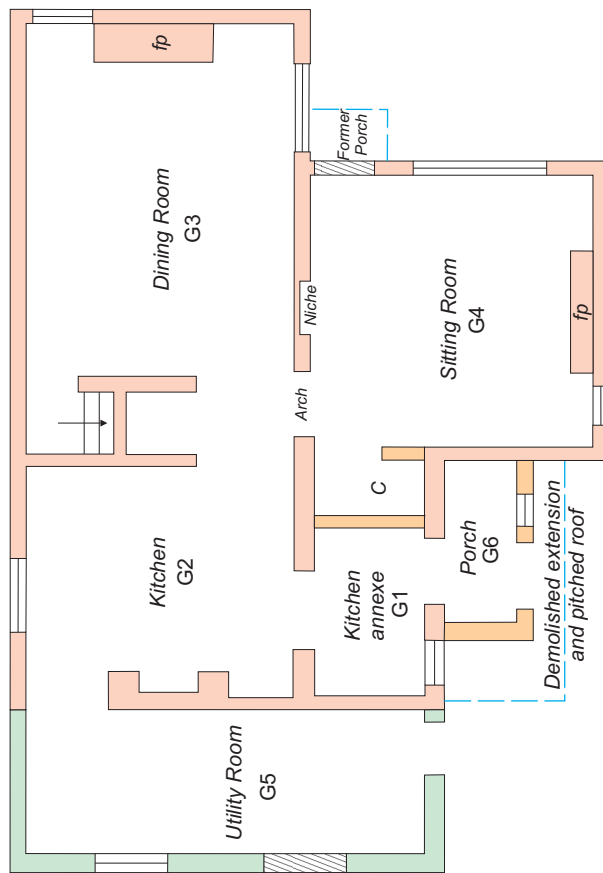
0043 Office G17, interior Fig 19








0017 View west between house (G5) on left and workshops (G14) on right Fig 20



Scale 1:100



-  Blockings
-  Original cottage
-  Outshut
-  Modern
-  Demolished extension



Ground floor plan of Yew Tree Cottage Fig 21



0009 Yew Tree Cottage from across Wharf Road; note distance and angle from Yew Tree House on right Fig 22



0091 Yew Tree Cottage: mock victoriana fireplace in kitchen G2 Fig 23



0086 Wharf road frontage; central location of former porch and entrance Fig 26



0045 Yew Tree Cottage from rear, not outshut in centre Fig 24



0087 The existing porch and the scars of its larger predecessor Fig 25



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