



# Northamptonshire Archaeology

Archaeological building recording at 23 Regent  
Street, Northampton  
June 2013



## Northamptonshire Archaeology

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Northamptonshire  
County Council

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Report 13/113

July 2013



**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY**

**JULY 2013**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

**BUILDING RECORDING**

**AT 23 REGENT STREET**

**NORTHAMPTON**

**JUNE 2013**

**STAFF**

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

PROJECT DETAILS		OASIS No: <b>154156</b>
Project title	Archaeological Building Recording at 23 Regent Street, Northampton	
Short description	<p>Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake an archaeological building recording ahead of renovation and conversion of the property to housing. This assessment included a photographic survey as well as measured annotations to existing architects plans and elevations. Evidence for structural alterations and changes in the fabric were recorded in order to determine a sequence of historic development.</p> <p>Constructed as a boot and shoe factory in the mid 19th century, it later produced leather until the 1970s. The property was later used as a factory producing signage, canopies, blinds and awnings. A fire in the late 20th century caused significant damage to the interior of the structures, resulting in the site being abandoned and lying derelict until 2013, when plans to convert the buildings to residential dwellings were approved.</p> <p>Despite the damage caused by the fire, some remnants of former machinery such as a drive shaft and a service lift remained in situ.</p>	
Project type	Building assessment	
Previous work	Unknown	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	19th-century factory	
PROJECT LOCATION		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	23 Regent Street, Northampton	
NGR	SP 7525 6097	
Area	c340 sq m	
PROJECT CREATORS		
Organisation	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Project brief originator	Lesley Ann Mather, NCC	
Project design originator	Northamptonshire Archaeology	
Director/Supervisor	Tim Upson Smith	
Project Manager	Steve Parry	
Sponsor or funding body	Mr Mansha Syed	
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Table 1: Chronological list of known businesses at 23 Regent Street

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING RECORDING**  
**AT 23 REGENT STREET, NORTHAMPTON**  
**JUNE 2013**

**Abstract**

*Northamptonshire Archaeology was commissioned to undertake archaeological building recording at a former boot and shoe factory, 23 Regent Street, Northampton, ahead of renovation and conversion of the property to housing. This assessment included a photographic survey as well as measured annotations to existing architects plans and elevations. Evidence for structural alterations and changes in the fabric were recorded in order to determine a sequence of historic development.*

*Originally constructed as a boot and shoe factory in the mid 19th century, it later produced leather until the 1970s. The property was later used as a factory producing signage, canopies, blinds and awnings. A fire in the late 20th century caused significant damage to the interior of the structures, resulting in the site being abandoned and lying derelict until 2013, when plans to convert the buildings to residential dwellings were approved.*

*Despite the damage caused by the fire, some remnants of former machinery such as a drive shaft and a service lift remained in situ.*

**1 INTRODUCTION**

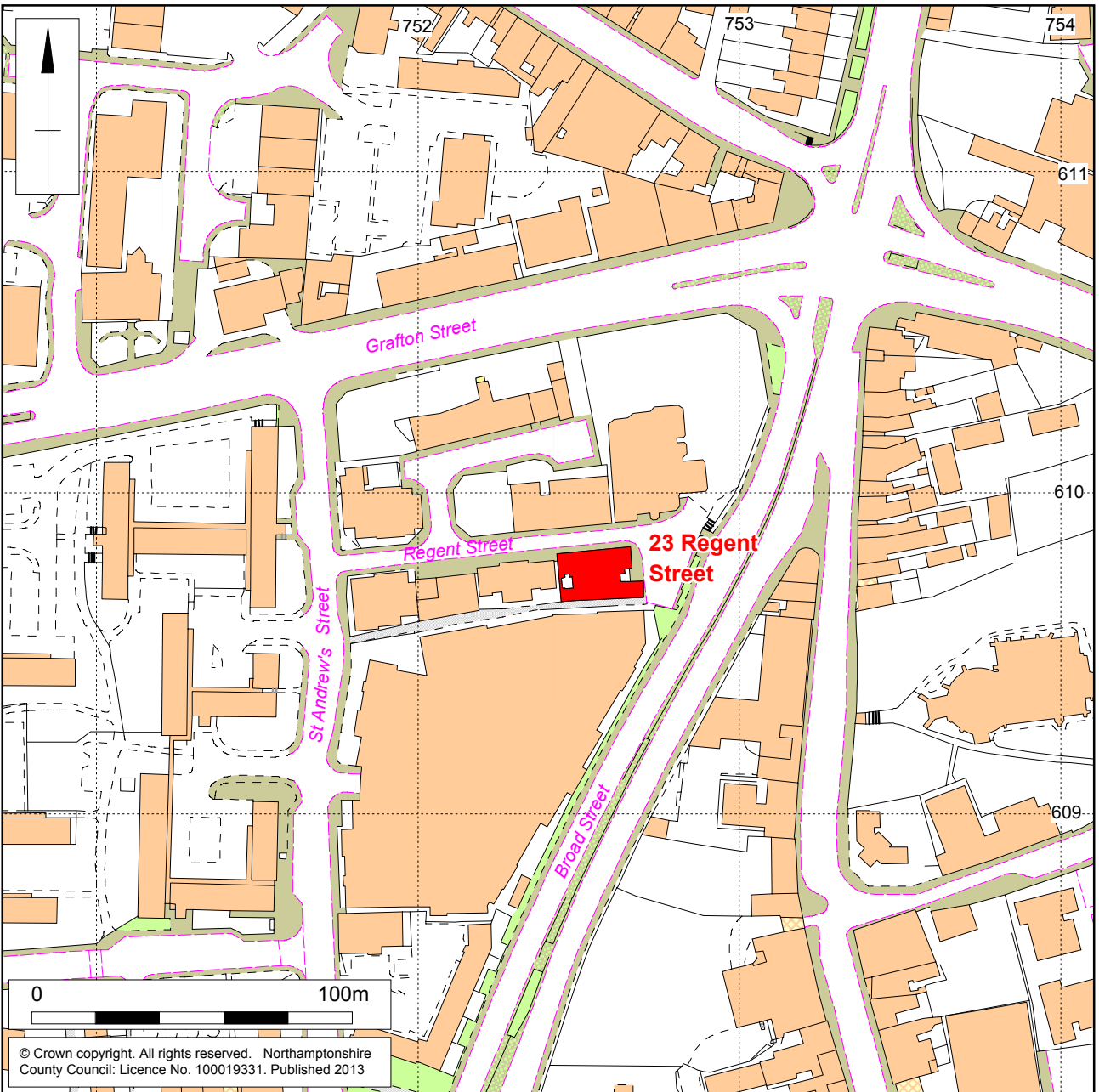
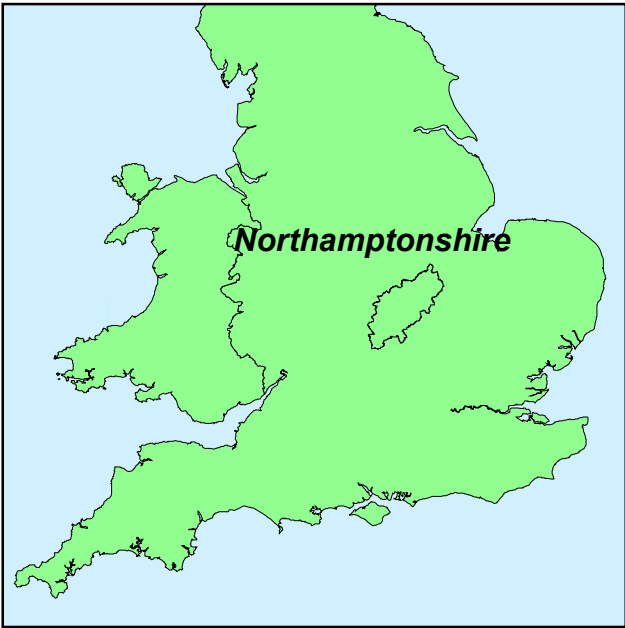
Northamptonshire Archaeology (NA) was commissioned by Mr Syed to undertake archaeological building recording at 23 Regent Street, Northampton, (NGR SP 7525 6097, Fig 1). The work was carried out in June 2013, in response to a planning application for the conversion of the former factory into flats.

The former boot and shoe factory lies to the west of the Boot and Shoe Conservation Area, within the centre of Northampton, bound by Grafton Street to the north, Broad Street to the east and St Andrew's Street to the west (Figs 1 & 5). The immediate surrounding area has been heavily redeveloped for flats and housing in recent times. The site comprises two east-west orientated, three-storey structures, referred to as Buildings 1 and 2 in this text, a two-storey annex to the west of Building 1 and a single storey extension to the east of Building 2 (Fig 6). Buildings 1 and 2 were separate at the time of this survey but were connected by a linking structure until recently. The annex and extension were also demolished by the time of this survey. The main buildings are primarily of red brick, mainly in English bond, with bullnose bricks forming a wallplate below the eaves. Building 2 has a basement of ironstone which forms a foundation for the brick structure above.

Construction work which included demolition of the outbuildings, replacement of the internal structure, and construction of extensions and new internal partitions was ongoing during this survey. The fire damage sustained by the structures meant that much of the original fabric of the buildings has been lost and parts of the building were inaccessible due to safety concerns. Building 2 had suffered the most damage from the fire and the first and second floor joists and subfloors were unsafe to stand upon. Photography of the south elevation of Building 1 was limited because of the narrow space available between this building and the flats to the south. Due to the stripped-out and damaged nature of the buildings, it was not possible to attribute specific working practices to individual areas. Several of the window and door openings had been blocked to make the site secure during its abandonment.

Building 1 was less fire damaged and retained some original features such as a service elevator, electrical fittings and remnants of a drive shaft on the second floor.





Scale 1:2000

Site location Fig 1

## 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The level of recording was specified as Level 2 – a descriptive and analytical record (English Heritage 2006, 14).

This is defined by English Heritage as consisting of:

- A written account of the building's origins, development and use
- An account of the evidence on which the analysis is based
- A drawn and photographic record to illustrate the building's appearance and structure.

Site visits were made in June 2013, when the principal exterior elevations were photographed. The interiors were photographically recorded to include structural details that might be lost during the development and notes were made of any features and alterations. Annotations were made to existing architects drawings, making note of any features of a historical or architectural interest.

## 3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND by Charlotte Walker

Historical information regarding the factory is sparse and it was not included in the Boot and Shoe Survey undertaken by English Heritage and Northamptonshire County Council. Much of the following information has been derived from trade directories.

*Table 1: Chronological list of known businesses at 23, Regent Street*

Date	Busines
1849-1894	Henry Harday Wholesale boot and shoe manufacturer, 23 Regent Street in 1869, 17-23 Regent Street in 1894
1903	T C Mann and Sons Shoe Manufacturers
1914-1928	George Letts Currier
1936-1952	Cannon and Garrett Currier
1954-1973	G E Evans Leather Dresser

Henry Harday was first mentioned at Regent Street in the 1849 Whellan Directory. His home was listed at Regent Square. In 1854, Henry Harday Senior was listed as the Master of the Dryden Free School, Secretary to the Infirmary and Lunatic Hospital and agent to the Globe Fire and Life Office.



Ordnance Survey map, 1886 1:500

Fig 2

Henry Harday appears to have been a fairly prominent businessman within the town and is associated with a number of conveyances and mortgages as a building society trustee, including with the development of the Lower Thrift Street area. In 1859, he appeared on a handbill, produced subsequent to a meeting of Northampton-based boot and shoe manufacturers (Fig 3). They had resolved to introduce sewing machines for the production of machine-closed uppers, simultaneously on the 14th February 1859, since their introduction elsewhere in the country was affecting business. Prior to this shoes had been hand-closed, which was a task largely fulfilled by workers based in their own homes, and there had been considerable resistance by them, with the workers fearing the introduction of the factory-system and loss of jobs (Richard 2000).

The factory first appears on First Edition Ordnance Survey maps dating from 1885 (map of 1886 reproduced here, Fig 2). It is not labelled on any of these early Ordnance Survey editions (First to Third), although the evidence from the directories indicates that it was certainly in use for much of that period.



Handbill announcing the introduction of sewing machines (Richard 2000) Fig 3

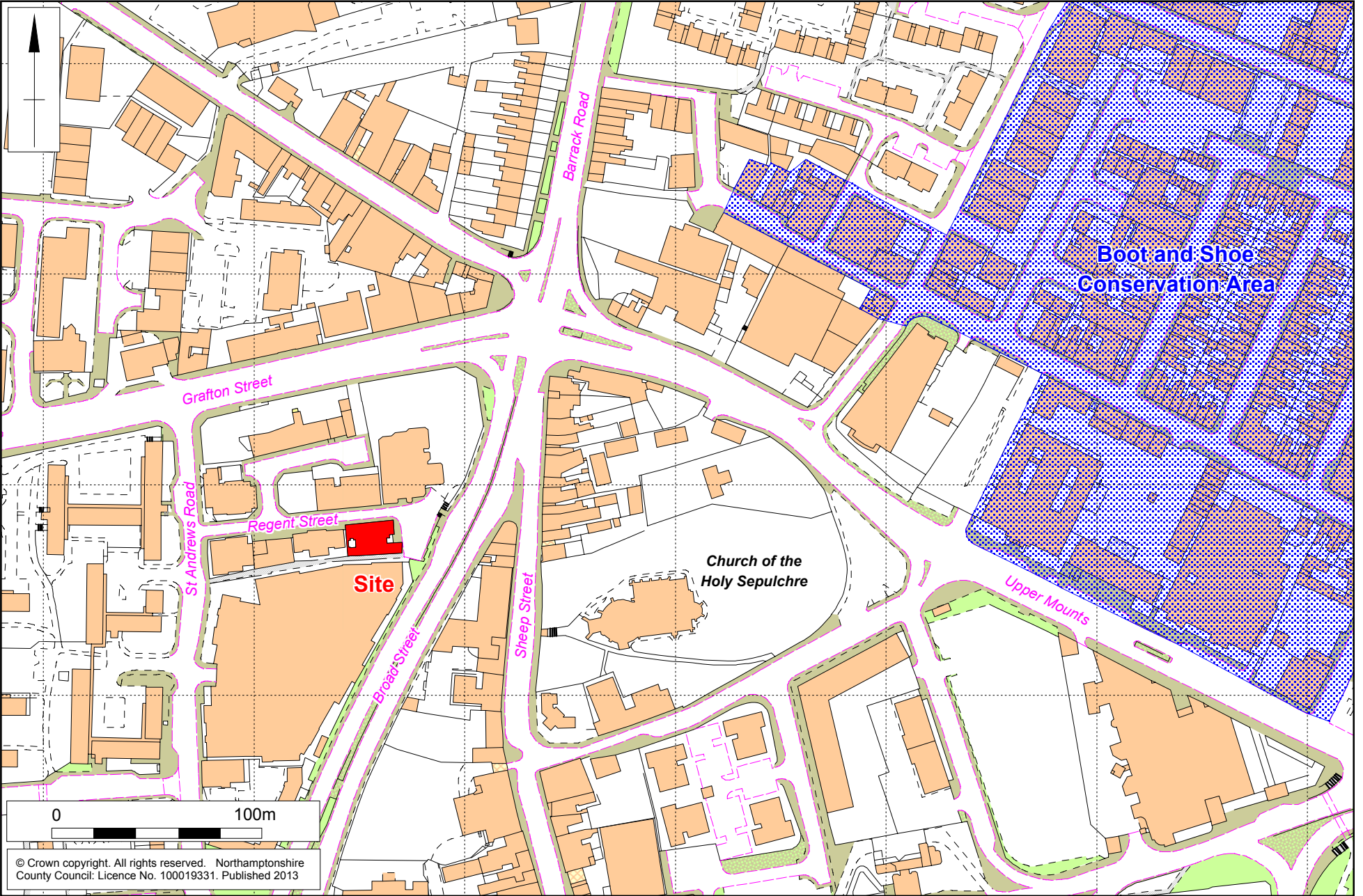
Henry Harday's business survived until at least 1894, by which time it was associated with numbers 17-23 Regent Street. No firm appears to be listed for a number of years around the turn of the century, suggesting it remained unoccupied. A company called T C Mann is listed in 1903, but there is no further mention of them.

George Letts is mentioned for the first time in 1914. His was a firm of curriers, currying being another term for leather dressing, a trade that had become more significant within the county since the middle of the 19th century (Morrison and Bond 2004). Curriers bought ready-tanned leather from suppliers based in either London or other ports, although they often had pits for re-tanning the leather. Leather was processed on the lower floors of the factory, requiring large volumes of water for soaking and washing, while on the upper floors the leather was sorted and dried, requiring ample ventilation.

Another currier, Cannon and Garrett, was present during the period 1936-1952. An advert from the 1952 edition of Kelly's Directory indicates their specialities included lining calf, lining sides and box sides (Fig 4). From 1954 until at least 1973 the factory was occupied by G E Evans, a firm of leather dressers.



Advert from Kelly's Directory 1952 Fig 4



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Scale 1:2500 (A4)

The site in relation to the Boot and Shoe Conservation area

Fig 5

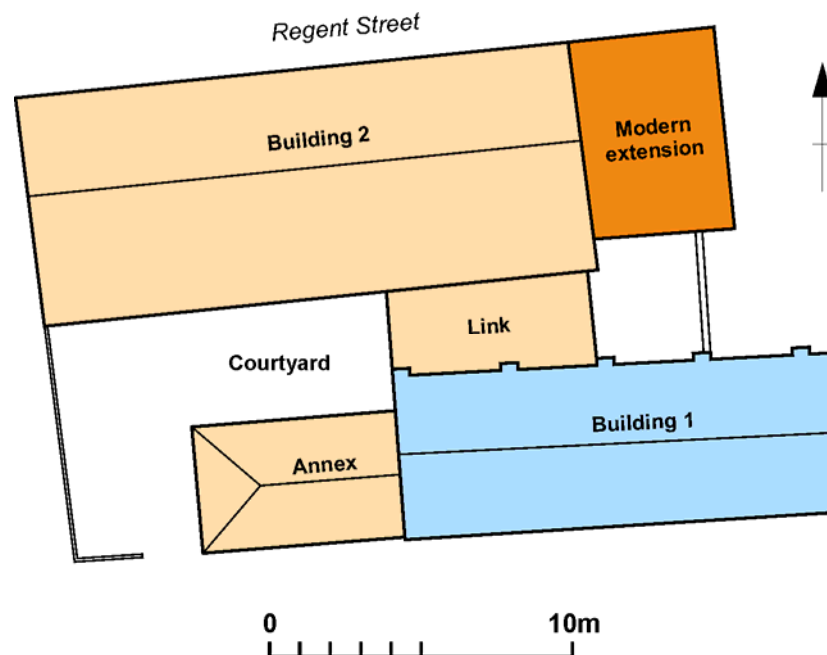
## 4 BUILDING RECORDING

### 4.1 Development

It is possible to suggest a comparative sequence of construction and development for the site. The earliest construction can be dated to the mid 19th century, represented by Building 1. Stylistically, this building seems earlier than Building 2. The annex to the west of Building 1 appears to be of a later date and a vertical join between the two can be seen. It is probable that the construction of the annex is contemporary with that of Building 2.

With the construction of Building 2, the two buildings were linked with a two-storey structure with sloped roof which encompassed the overlap between them. This structure was demolished prior to this survey but the scar of the roof and several of the former beam slots were visible. The construction of this linking structure necessitated the conversion of a second floor delivery door into a window to accommodate the roof (Fig 7). The delivery door below this remained unchanged and allowed first floor access to Building 2.

At a later date, probably mid 20th century, Building 2 was extended eastwards at ground floor level.



The development of the site Fig 6

### 4.2 Exterior

The exterior elevations of the two main structures are of red brick in English course, plain, with no decorative brickwork except for bullnose bricks at the eaves and bullnose edged pilasters between the north facing windows of Building 1 (Fig 7). Uniform rows of plain rectangular windows are set into the main elevations, facing north and south (Figs 10 & 13). The eastern, gabled elevations of both buildings were plastered at a later date, most likely in the mid 20th century (Fig 8).

Due to fire damage, no windows survived in Building 2 with the exception of a badly fire damaged sash frame at ground floor level on the north elevation (Fig 48). This window type suggests that this area of the building functioned as office space rather than workshops or factory floor. Except for those at top floor level on the south wall, the windows are set within slightly arched, tapered, segmented lintels and stone sills. Building 1 has a much greater survival of windows. These are 29 lights set in cast iron frames with inward opening, central hoppers, with decorative, cast iron stays internally (Figs 28 & 29). Forty-five light, cast iron framed windows were present at the eastern end of the north elevation (Fig 23). All windows in Building 1 were set between segmental arched lintels and stone sills.

The uniformity in window and door configuration seen on the north elevation of Building 2 is partially disrupted on the south elevation (Fig 17). The regularity of the windows is disrupted at ground floor level for reasons which are unclear due to lack of remaining evidence. Built at a lower level than the windows to either side, a doorway in this elevation provides access from the courtyard to the ground floor of Building 2. A blocked doorway in the basement suggests a former stair leading up to the courtyard in this area (Fig 60).

A two-storey annex to the west of Building 1 had been demolished prior to this survey. This building was approximately 6.8m x 4.2m with a hipped roof. Internal ground floor access to Building 1 was through a wide arched opening c3.5m wide (Fig 25). This building was contemporary with the main structure with 29 light cast iron framed windows with central hoppers.

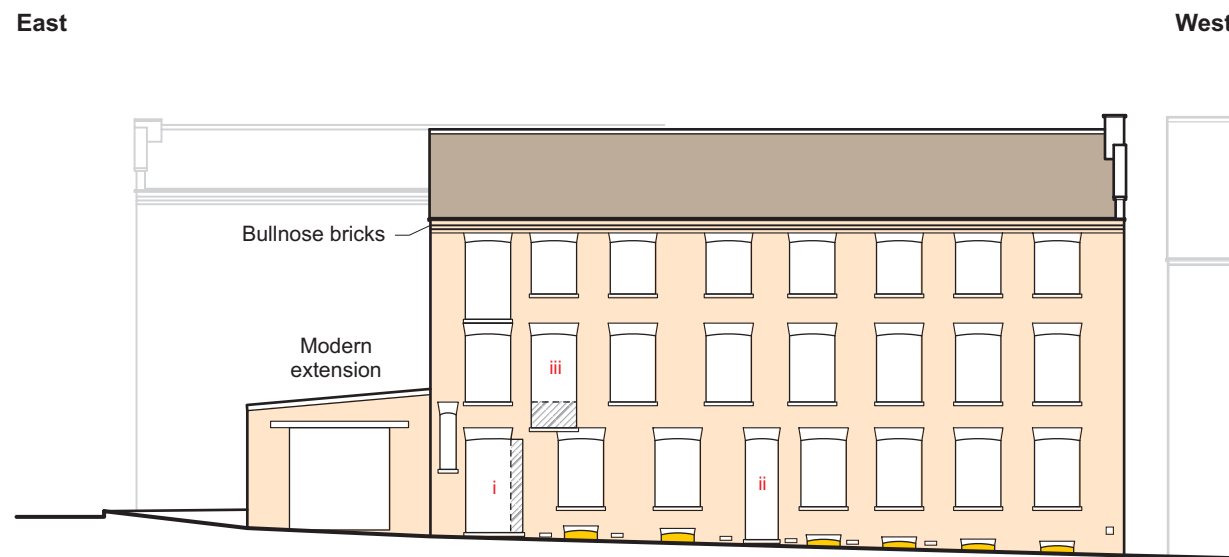
Photographic evidence shows the eastern extension of Building 2 was a modern addition to the building (Fig 11). A blocked doorway in the east elevation of Building 2 formerly allowed passage between the two (Fig 43). The extension had a double garage door opening onto Regent Street (Fig 7).

The two main structures were formerly linked at the east. The scar of the roof slope was visible on Buildings 1 and 2 and beam slots for the former joists were visible on the north elevation of Building 1 (Figs 7 & 25). A pair of square, opposing openings with cast iron grills, in the north elevation of Building 1 and the south elevation of Building 2 respectively, were visible in the area formerly bound by the passage (Fig 7). The purpose of these openings is unclear.

A door opening with peaked lintel over is present in the north elevation of Building 1 (Figs 7 & 20). This door seems to have served the original building along with the doors below, likely allowing for the hoisting of goods to the upper floors. This door was reduced and converted to a window with the construction of the link structure (Fig 7).

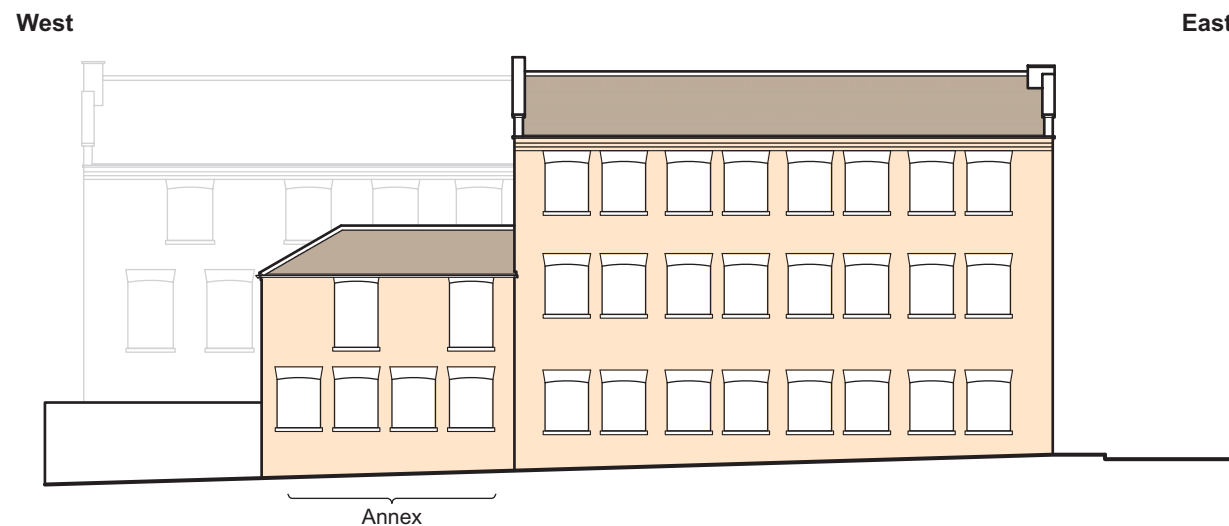
Main access to Building 2 was through the north elevation (Figs 7 & 10). This door was later widened and a lobby created. A secondary door on the same elevation allowed access to the offices. A door on the north elevation of the first floor was originally a window which has been lengthened to form a door (Fig 7). The bottom of the current door encroaches into the lintel of the ground floor window below. The main entrance on ground floor level has been widened.

Historic maps show several smaller structures present in the current courtyard area, abutting the south wall of Building 2. A scar seen on the south wall of Building 2 likely relates to one of these structures. Evidence for a former, gabled building, demolished to make way for housing, could be seen on the western elevation of Building 2 (Fig 9).

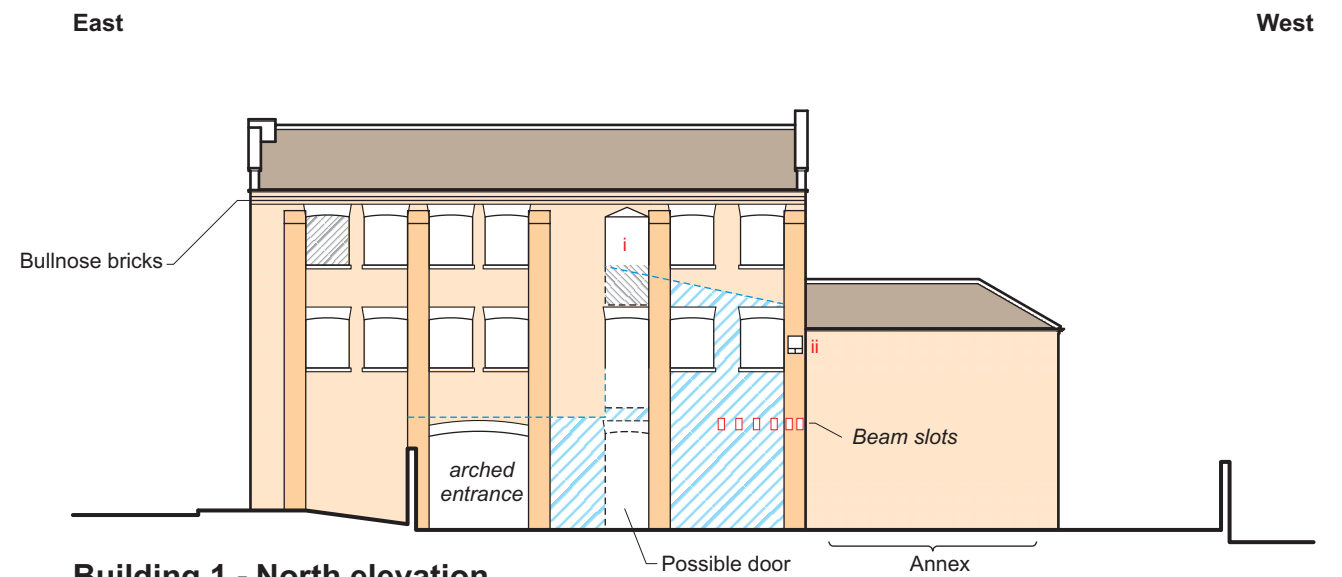


**Building 2 - North elevation**

- Opening enlarged
- Light wells blocked
- i Main entrance (Widened)
- ii Secondary door
- iii Window converted to door

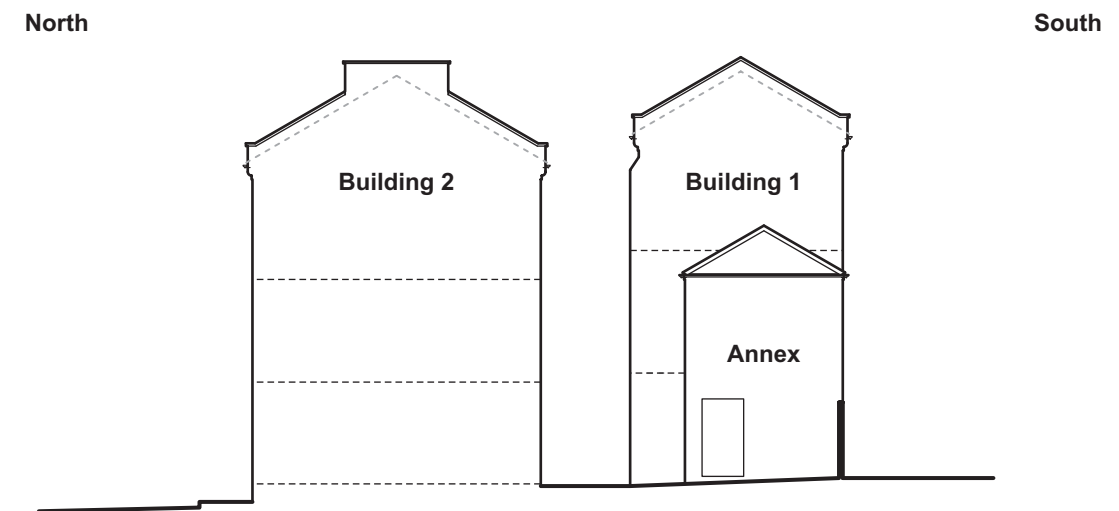


**Building 1 - South elevation**



**Building 1 - North elevation**

- Window blocked
- Door converted
- Possible extent of link structure
- i Door with peaked lintel
- ii Iron framed square opening



**West elevation**





The site prior to development, showing modern extension, looking south-west (image taken from google street view) Fig 8



The north and western elevations of Building 2, showing scar of demolished structure Fig 9



North elevation, Building 2 (Photocomposite), looking south Fig 10



The modern extension to the west of Building 2, looking south-east (image taken from google street view) Fig 11



South and east elevations, Building 1, looking north-west Fig 12



The south elevation of Building 1, prior to construction of new flats (Morrison, A, K & Bond, A, fig 54) Fig 13



The south entrance to the courtyard, looking north - west Fig 14



Window in the south wall of the former west annex Fig 15



The west elevation of Building 1, showing scars of demolished annex, looking east  
Fig 16



South elevation of Building 2 with staggered beam slots and scar visible, looking north-  
east Fig 17



View down the space between the two buildings, looking east Fig 18



Building 2, scar of former link structure (note square opening at bottom left) Fig 19



Building 1, door with peaked lintel Fig 20



Building 1, north elevation, beam slots Fig 21



Building 2, north elevation, electrical fittings Fig 22

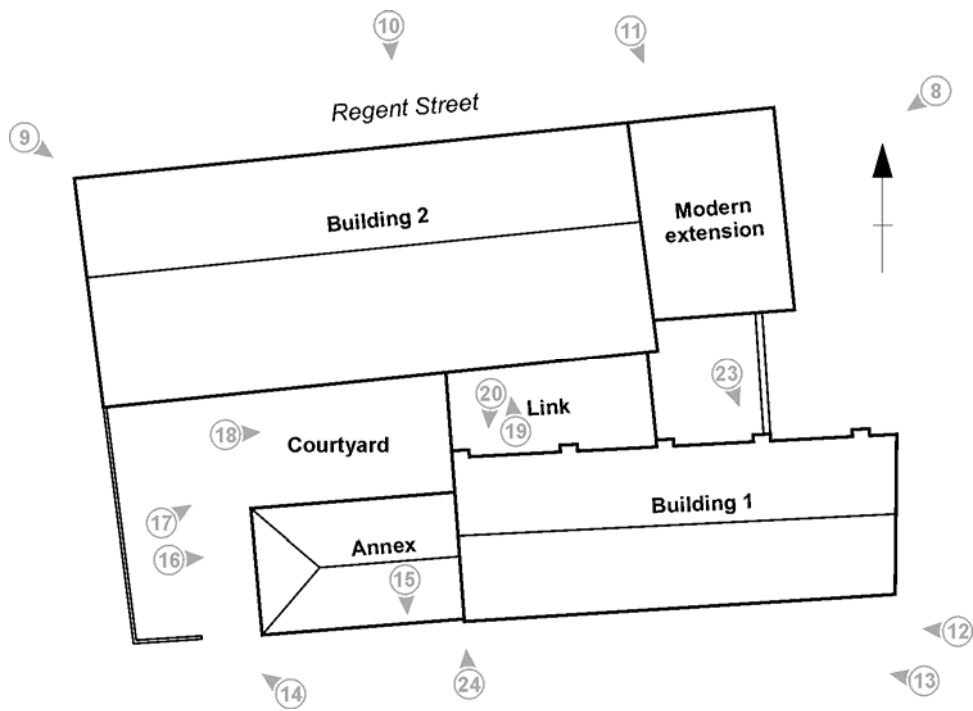


Building 1, north elevation, different window types Fig 23





Building 1, south elevation, showing the join between the annex and Building 1 with iron tie plate Fig 24



Locations of the exterior photographs

### 4.3 Building 1: Ground Floor

The building is entered through the passage formed between the two buildings, via an arched doorway in the south elevation (Fig 7). Inside is a long, open plan space with a blocked fireplace flanked with an arch at the east end of the room (Figs 25 – 27). A lift is located in the north-west corner of the room, leading up to the first and second floors (Figs 25 & 30). This lift seems to have been the only way of accessing the upper floors of the building. A wide, arched opening in the west wall led into the demolished annex (Fig 16). A box of electrical fuses was fixed to the north wall, under the archway (Fig 31).

The fireplace, in keeping the style of windows throughout this building, has an arched, brick mantle over an opening 0.6m wide x 0.8m high (Fig 27). The date of the blocking is uncertain.

The room is lit by large windows in the south and north walls. These windows are fitted with cast iron 29 light windows with central, inward opening hopper (Figs 28 & 29). They have segmental arched lintels externally. It is probable that electric lights were also fitted on this floor. Nothing remains in the working area to indicate the past function of this room.

The ceiling is of timber with joists running east west supported centrally by three, equally spaced, north-south principal beams (Fig 25).

### 4.4 Building 1: First Floor

With the same configuration as the ground floor, this is an open plan space with no evidence of internal partitions surviving (Fig 25). The room is lit by windows to the north and south and by tube lights, fitted in the mid 20th century. This room also has a fireplace, now blocked, at the eastern end (Fig 33).

The lift rises up from the ground floor in the north-west corner of the room and continues up to the second floor (Figs 25 & 32). No fittings for machinery or equipment remained in the room.

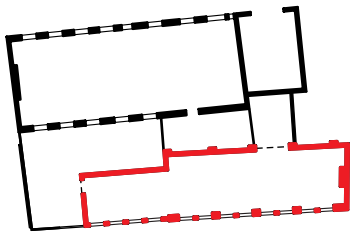
A door survives in the west wall, formerly providing access to the west annex (Fig 32).

### 4.5 Building 1: Second Floor

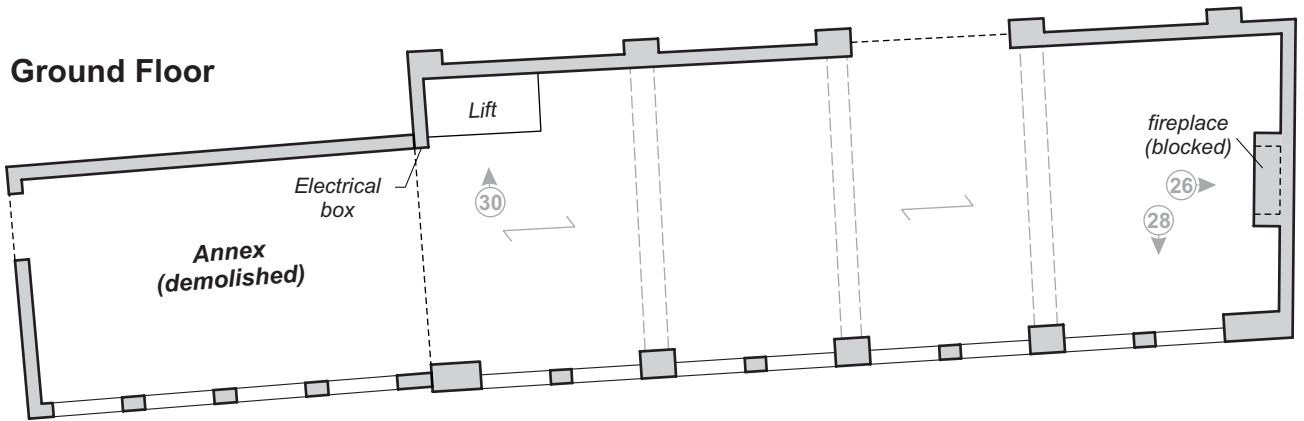
This floor, accessed by the lift in the north-west corner of the room, housed the lift hoist, fitted atop an iron frame over the lift shaft (Figs 40 & 41). A trapdoor beside the lift shaft could be raised and lowered to close off this floor (Figs 25 & 43). The remains of a drive shaft with “paddles” radiating along its length was held suspended above the three trusses, running east-west, off centre to the room (Figs 25, 34 & 36). The drive shaft likely increased ventilation in the room, vital for the preparation of leather. The mechanism which powered the driveshaft is no longer in the building though scars on the east and west walls indicate the presence of a former supporting structure at either end of the room (Figs 34 & 35).

The roof is made of simple pine trusses carrying purlins and rafters (Fig 35).

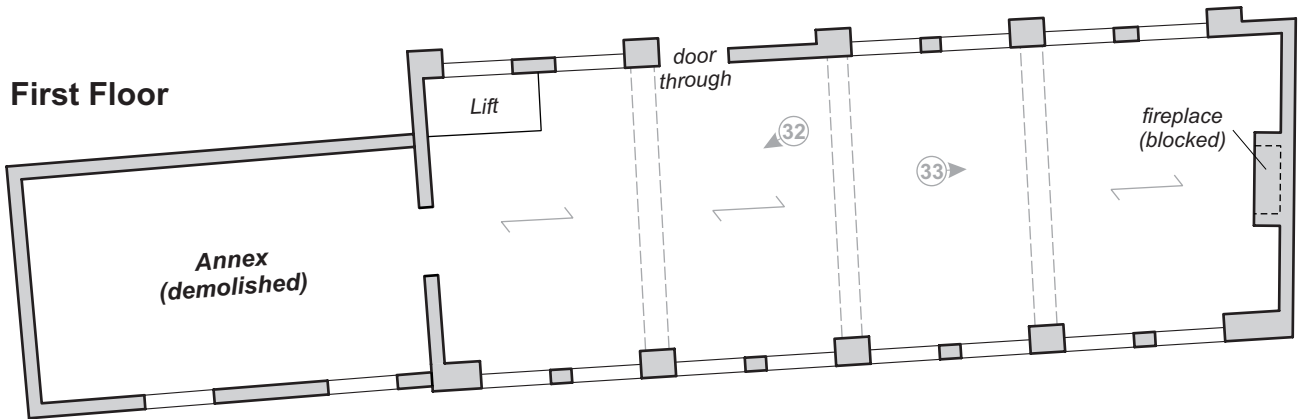
A door with peaked lintel over is built into the south elevation (Figs 7 & 20). This was originally a delivery door though no evidence for a hoist survives. This door was converted to a window to accommodate the link structure.



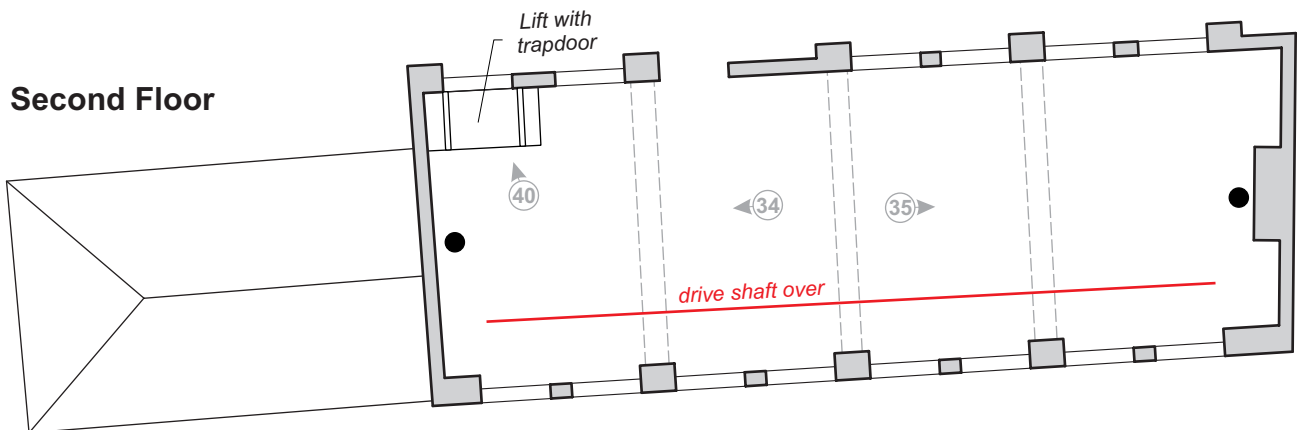
**Ground Floor**



**First Floor**



**Second Floor**



- Scar for machine support visible on wall
- 33 → Position of photo with Fig number





Building 1, ground floor, east wall with blocked fireplace flanked by arch Fig 26



Building 1, detail of the east fireplace Fig 27



Building 1, ground floor, south wall Fig 28



Building 1, ground floor, detail of the window hoppers Fig 29



Building 1, ground floor, view of the lift shaft with electric box to the left Fig 30



Detail of the electric box Fig 31



Building 1, first floor, looking west, showing lift shaft and door to former annex Fig 32



Building 1, first floor, looking east, showing chimney flue with blocked fireplace Fig 33



Building 1, second floor, looking east, showing lift shaft and scar of former machine support with drive shaft carried over the truss Fig 34



Building 1, second floor, looking east, showing chimney flue Fig 35





Detail of the drive shaft and “paddles”, looking west Fig 36



Detail of the drive shaft Fig 37



Detail of the drive shaft Fig 38



Remnants of mechanism, not *in situ* Fig 39



The top of the lift shaft Fig 40



Detail of the lift hoist Fig 41



Detail of the trapdoor hinge Fig 42

#### 4.6 Building 2: Ground Floor

Main entry to this building is from Regent Street via a main door and a secondary door in the north elevation. The building can also be accessed at ground floor via the south elevation (Fig 43). A door, blocked by the time of this survey, formerly provided access through the eastern extension.

The main door has been widened from its original dimensions. The current width of the door is wider than the original lintel above. This door opens into a narrow lobby / stairwell which is aligned with the widening of the door, indicating that it is a later addition to the structure or was also widened to accommodate the new door (Figs 44 - 46). Two doors open into the main room through the lobby. Fire damage and subsequent securing and demolition have removed all evidence of interior partitions and layout on this floor. The partition walls forming the lobby are of lath and plaster. Outside the main stairwell, in the south-east corner of the room are stairs leading down to the basement. A spine beam runs the length of the building, east-west and passes over and is supported by the lobby walls. A small cupboard is present in the space between the lobby and the east wall of the building.

The room was formerly lit by the north and south facing windows. No window glass or cast iron frames survive in this building but the fire damaged remains of a sash window frame could be seen to the right of the secondary door (Figs 48). The presence of a sash window in this part of the building suggests that this area functioned as offices rather than as a factory floor. All windows in the building had tapered, slightly arched lintels and stone sills. No evidence for electrical lights survived in the room but it can be assumed that these were fitted (Fig 47).

The scars of two chimney flues can be seen on the west wall of the room. It is unclear when these flues were removed.

#### 4.7 Building 2: Basement

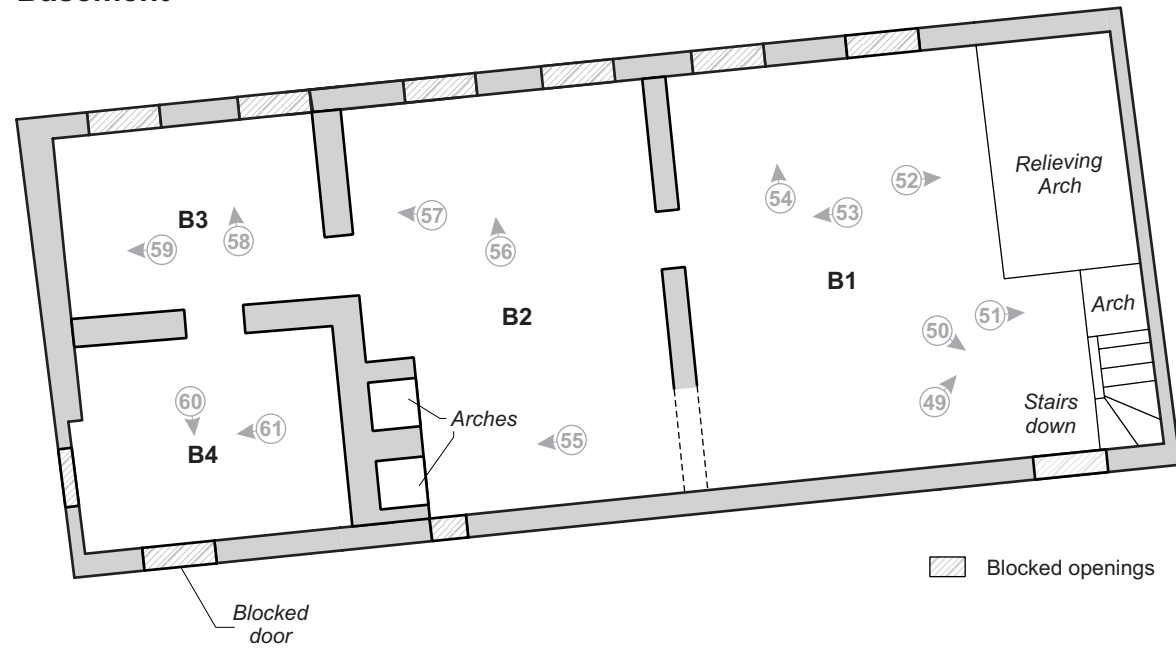
On the same footprint as the ground floor, the basement is subdivided into four rooms (Fig 43). It is accessed via a stair in the south-east corner of Room 1. In contrast to the brick structure above, the walls and partitions of the basement are primarily constructed of ironstone rather than brick.

The stairs are carried over relieving arches in the basement supported on a central wall (Figs 49, 51 & 52). A light well adjacent to the stairs was blocked in brick (Fig 50).

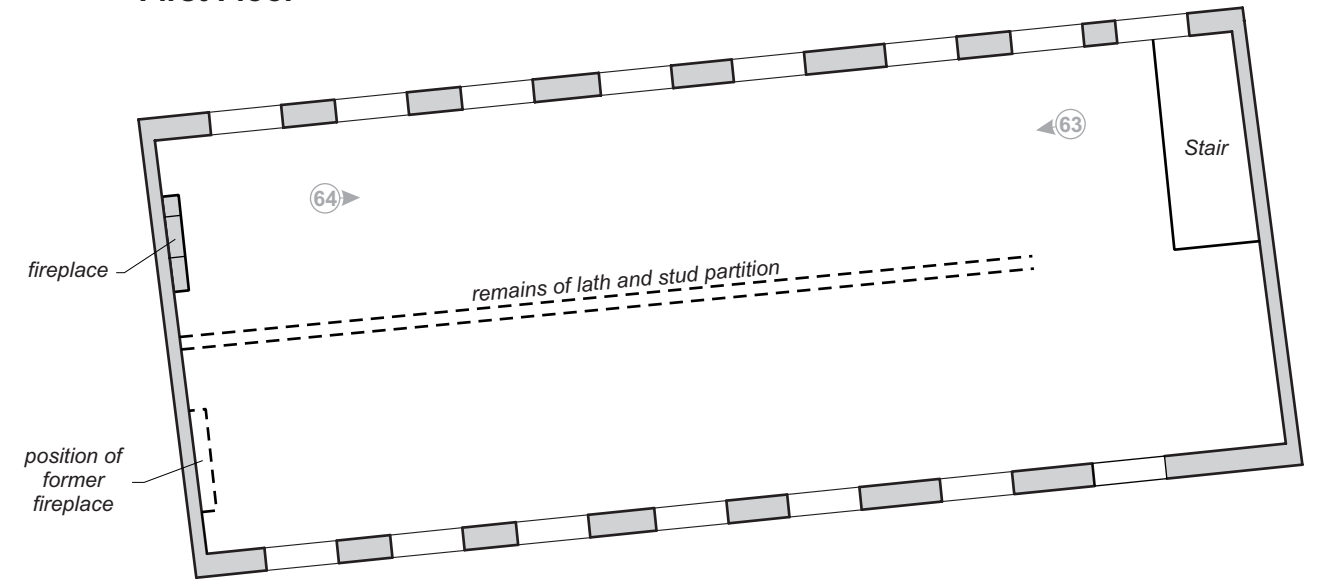
A central wall of dressed ironstone, which divides Rooms 1 and 2, was partially demolished by the time of this survey (Fig 53). A pair of arched openings, most likely serving as storage are in the south-west corner of Room 1, built against the west wall (Fig 55). An electrical switch is fixed to the wall in the north-west corner of the room (Fig 56 & 57). The remains of a metal boiler or heater are present in this room, though not *in situ* (Fig 62).

Light wells and vents were built into the north wall of the basement. These were blocked by the time of this survey, most likely for security. A light well, now blocked could also be seen facing westwards in Room 4. A door formerly provided access between Room 4 and the courtyard to the south (Fig 60).

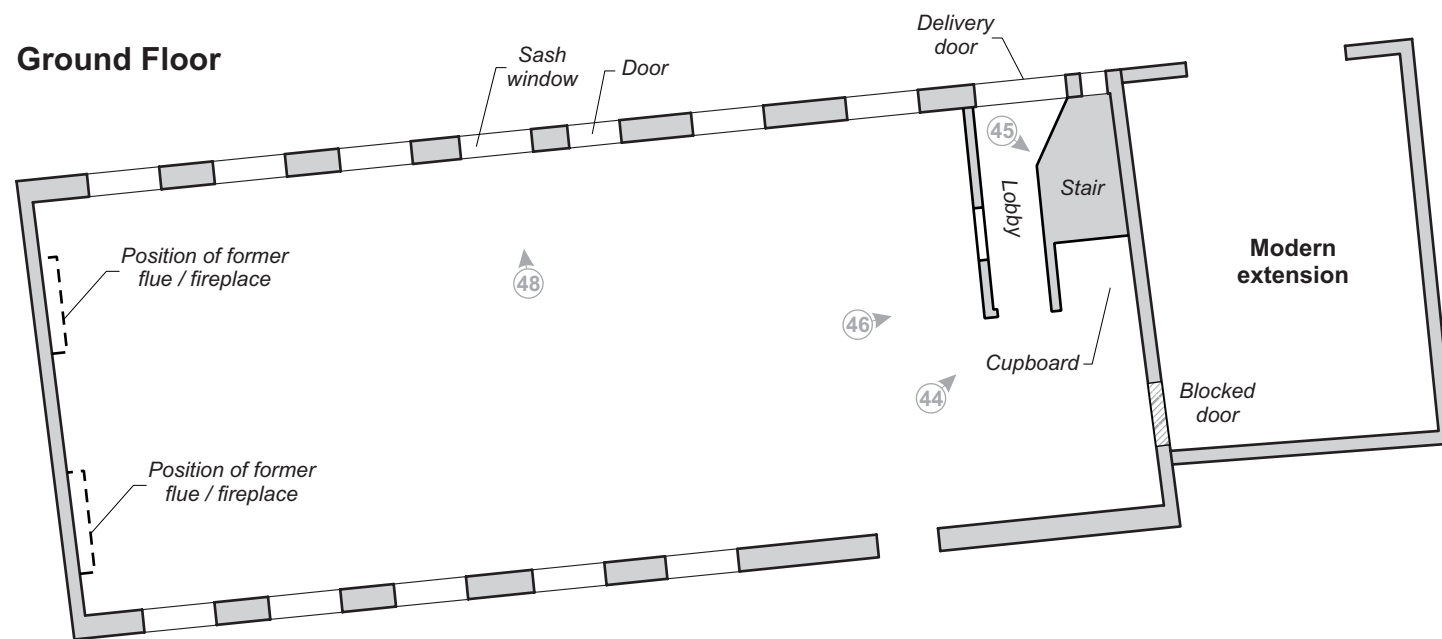
**Basement**



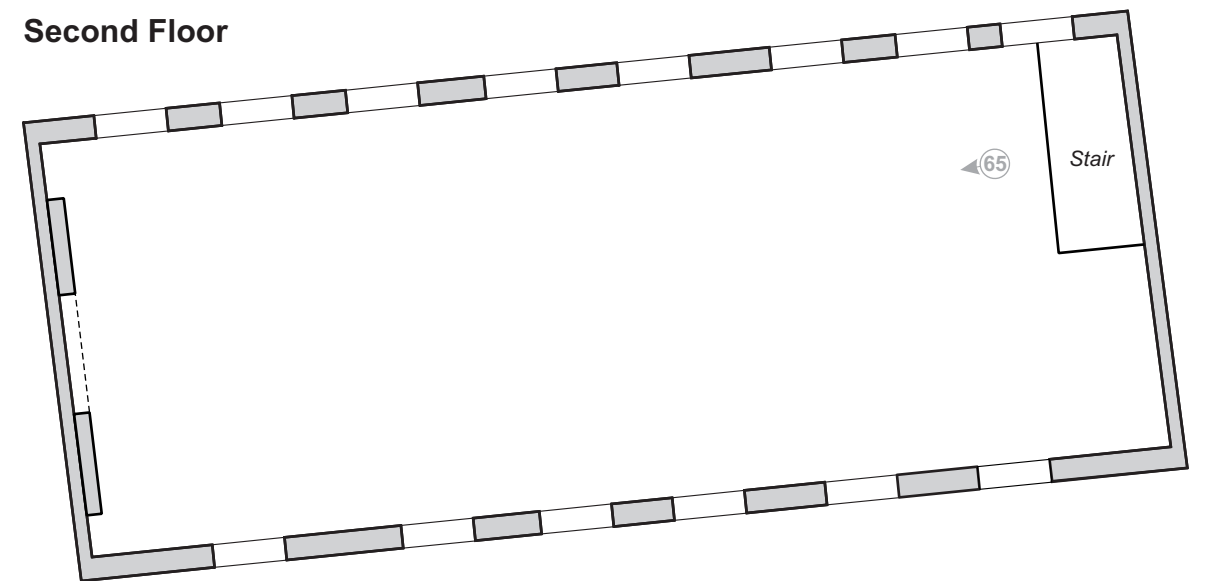
**First Floor**



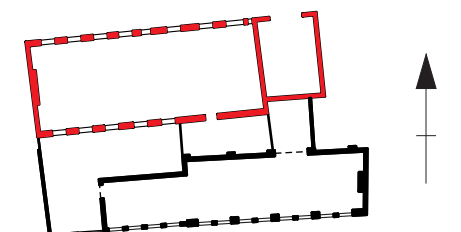
**Ground Floor**



**Second Floor**



◀64 Position of photo with Fig number





Building 2, ground floor, the lobby and stair Fig 44



View within the lobby, looking south Fig 45



View of the stair from ground to first floor after demolition Fig 46



Detail of electric and utilities boxes in the lobby Fig 47





Building 2, ground floor, fire damaged sash window Fig 48



Building 2, Room B1, looking east, showing the stair down and relieving arches for the stair above Fig 49



The blocked light well adjacent to the basement stair Fig 50



Relieving arch adjacent to basement stair Fig 51



Relieving arch beneath the main stair Fig 52



Room B1, the central basement partition wall with door through, looking west Fig 53



Room B1, blocked light well with vent to the right, looking north Fig 54



Room B2, storage arches Fig 55



Room B2, blocked light well with electric box to the left Fig 56



Room B2, detail of the electric box Fig 57



Room B3, blocked light wells, looking north Fig 58



Room B3, the west wall, looking west Fig 59



Room B4, showing blocked door, looking south Fig 60



Room B4, showing blocked door, looking west Fig 61



Boiler or heater and work bench in Room B2 Fig 62

#### 4.8 Building 2: First Floor

Accessed via a stairwell in the north-east corner of the room, this floor was largely inaccessible due to severe fire damage to the floor joists. The remains of a central lath and stud partition runs east-west down the room, with the ends of the former joists visible beneath, carried on a spine beam (Fig 63).

Off centre to the west wall, a chimney flue with fireplace ascends upwards to the second floor. The scar of a second flue can be seen on this wall, further to the left of this. The room was lit by windows in the north and south and by electric lights which were added later (Fig 64).

#### 4.9 Building 2: Second Floor

This room was a large, open plan space with no evidence of partitions surviving. The two chimney flues merge together into a single flue and rise through the roof at the west end of the room (Fig 65). Due to the fire damage sustained by the floor joists, the room was deemed unsafe to enter.

The roof trusses are queen posts with additional bracing and the principal rafters are further braced with collars. Lighting is predominantly via the north and south windows on the same configuration as the first floor. Light fittings remained on several of the rafters but no evidence of machine fittings could be seen.

The floor is of timber floor boards supported on the joists carried by the spine beam.





Building 2, first floor, looking west, showing the remains of the central partition and joists  
Fig 63



Building 2, the remains of the central first floor partition with the stairwell in the background, looking east Fig 64



The second floor, looking west with chimney flues in the background Fig 65

## 5 DISCUSSION

The buildings discussed in this report, although not of great local or regional significance are important to the locality due to their distinct visual impact. They are integral to the history and development of the area and represent an aspect of life in Northampton which has now largely gone.

As one of the earliest boot and shoe factories in Northampton, the property was closely involved in this trade until the 1970s. It was retained as a factory, producing blinds and awnings until the late 20th century. In the following years, the property fell into disuse and abandonment. The buildings have lost nearly all of their original fixtures and fittings, largely due to fire and years of neglect.

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