

**Historic building recording
of a 19th-century house and workshop
off West Stockwell Street,
Colchester, Essex**

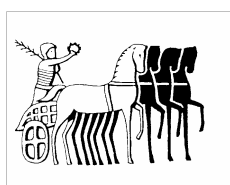
March 2013



**report prepared by
Chris Lister**

**commissioned by
Mills Whipp Projects Ltd
on behalf of
Fenwick Ltd**

CAT project ref: 13/03a
NGR: TL 9956 2529 (c)
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Colchester Archaeological Trust
Roman Circus House,
Circular Road North,
Colchester,
Essex, CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436 273304
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

CAT Report 691
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1 Summary

A programme of building recording was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on a complex of buildings off West Stockwell Street, Colchester, Essex in March 2013. Mills Whipp Projects Ltd on behalf of Fenwick Ltd commissioned the work. The complex comprises the rare remains of an example of early urban housing expansion in Colchester, dating to 1830 (later converted to a workshop), a large workshop dating to the last quarter of the 19th century and a small, single-storey structure dating to the start of the 20th century, all associated with a small-scale industrial undertaking. This industry was set up by Williams and Co, the forerunner of the landmark Colchester business, Williams and Griffin.

2 Introduction (Fig 5)

This is the archive report on the historic building recording of a house, warehouse and out-buildings (prior to their demolition) located off West Stockwell Street and to the north of St Runwald Street, Colchester, Essex. Mills Whipp Projects were commissioned by Fenwick Ltd to prepare and submit a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) governing the recording of buildings to be demolished for the construction of a new electrical substation to serve the adjacent retail areas (Mills Whipp 2013). After discussion with Martin Winter (Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer) it was agreed that an English Heritage Level 2 record would be made of the buildings to be demolished with an additional element examining the buildings in the context of the surrounding area. Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) carried out the work on behalf of Fenwick Ltd in March 2013. The site consists of a linear range of multi-phase structures, set back from the road on the west side of West Stockwell Street, between a 20th-century former telephone exchange to the north and the 19th-century Victoria Chambers to the south. The site is located at NGR TL 9956 2529.

All work was carried out according to standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2008a) and *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2008b), *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14).

3 Aims and building recording methodology

The aim of the building recording was to provide a descriptive record and assessment of the buildings prior to demolition. The level of building recording was carried out to Level 2 (English Heritage, 2006).

The following report includes:

- A brief documentary and cartographic assessment that places the complex within its historical context
- A block plan and elevations of the complex
- A digital photographic record of the exterior and interior of the buildings, including details of the façade and historic fixtures and fittings. The photographic record is accompanied by a photographic register detailing location and direction of shot (Appendix 2). Selected examples of the photographic record are clearly tied into the drawn record and reproduced as fully annotated photographic plates supporting the text (Appendix 1)

4 Historical background (Figs 1-4)

A documentary and cartographic search was undertaken at the Essex Records Office (ERO) and the Colchester Local Studies Centre to assess the evidence pertaining to the history and the evolution of the building.

The complex is a linear range of multi-phase structures extending west from West Stockwell Street (Fig 1). It occupies a densely built area of the town and shares

boundaries on three sides. To the north the complex is bounded by the former Telephone Exchange, built in 1928, and by the extension to the 1734 St Martin's House, constructed 1876-97, formerly the Essex and Suffolk Fire Offices. To the south the site shares a boundary with former stables associated with the Cups Hotel (now the Colchester Community Volunteer Service) built 1876-97, and the Victoria Chambers, built 1883 (now the site of a Pizza Express restaurant). The west end of the complex incorporates a wall formerly part of outbuildings associated with the Cups Hotel, now a car park for the Borough Council. Three distinct buildings form the structures that comprise the complex. Heading west from West Stockwell Street there is a small single-storey building, then a two-storey brick-built building, then a large workshop.

Map evidence has been used to date these structures, although the brick building can be securely dated by a brick with the inscription 'WR 1830'. The earliest map that depicts this building is Monson's map of 1848 (Fig 1).



Fig 1 Monson map of Colchester, 1848.

This shows a rectangular structure occupying the centre of the plot (shown in red) with a smaller structure off to the west. The open space to the north is the garden of St Martin's House, whilst to the south there is a large rectangular structure. Although difficult to see on the map, there is open ground between the south edge of the house and the property boundary. This open ground corresponds with the covered yards that lead to the large workshop on the site. The property depicted on the map extends further west than the 1830 house which may indicate the building was originally larger, possibly a back-to-back dwelling.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (Fig 2) shows a much-changed layout. The 1830 house is shown with substantial additions, including an L-shaped range extending to the west and a rectangular extension to the south which projects towards West Stockwell Street. The function of these extensions is unclear, although they may be the start of the conversion of the 1830 house from domestic to industrial usage. The long rectangular building to the south of the site has been removed

although there is still a boundary wall separating the site from the open ground beyond.

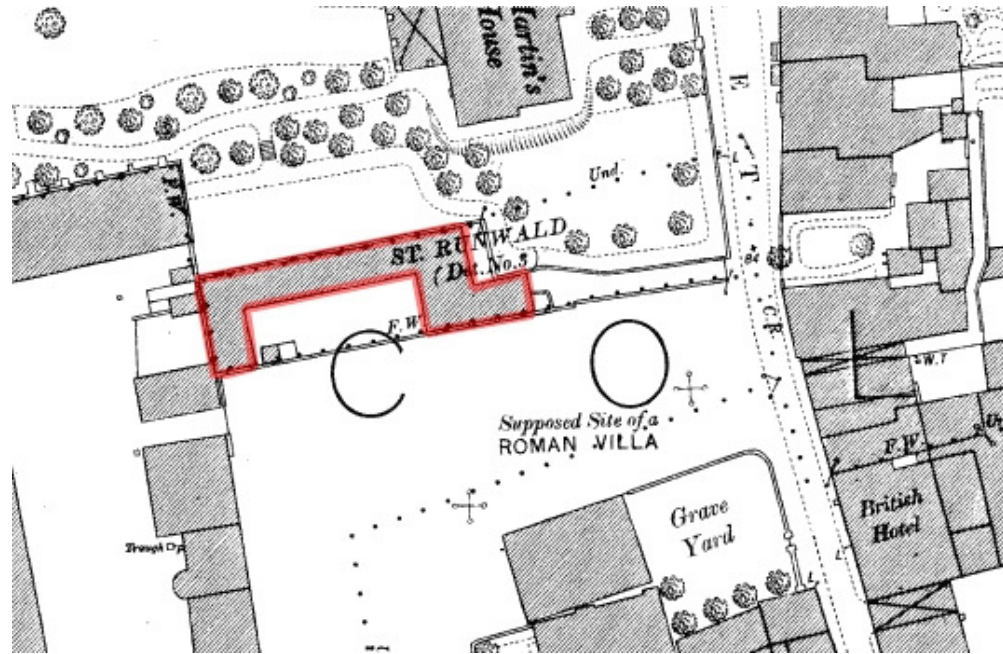


Fig 2 1st edition OS map, 1876.

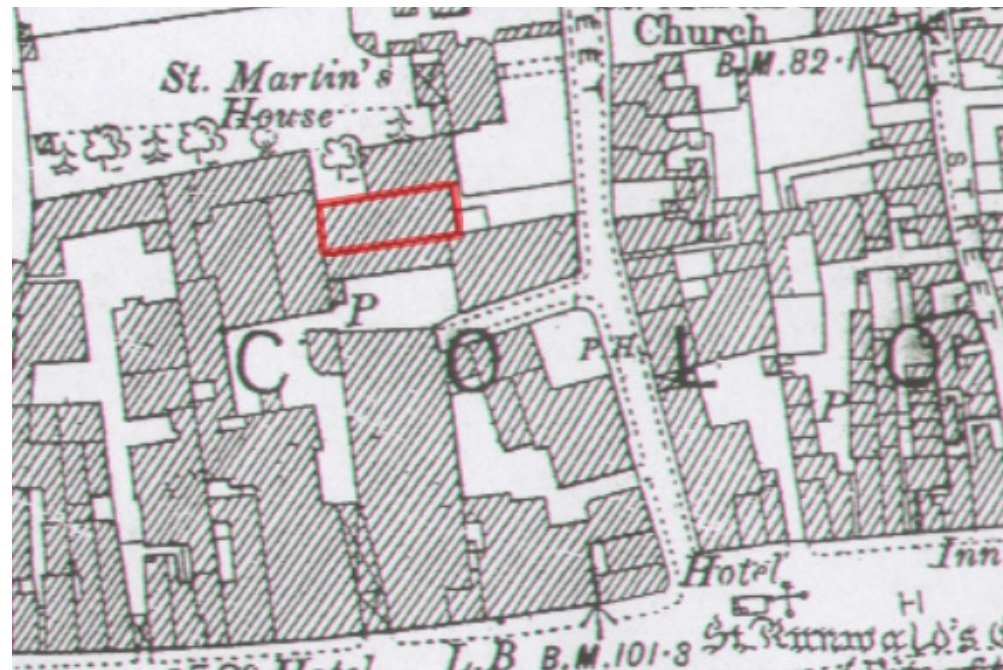


Fig 3 2nd edition OS map, 1897.

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1897 (Fig 3) shows further change to the complex. The entire width of the property is occupied by a large building extending from the east side of the 1830 house to the west end of the plot. The extension that was projecting towards West Stockwell Street has been removed. The surrounding area has also been developed. To the north there is an extension to St Martin's House, whilst to the south, buildings have been erected along the length of the

property boundary (the 1883 Victoria Chambers and the stables associated with the Cups Hotel).

The full extent of the complex is shown on an insurance map dating to 1909 (Fig 4).

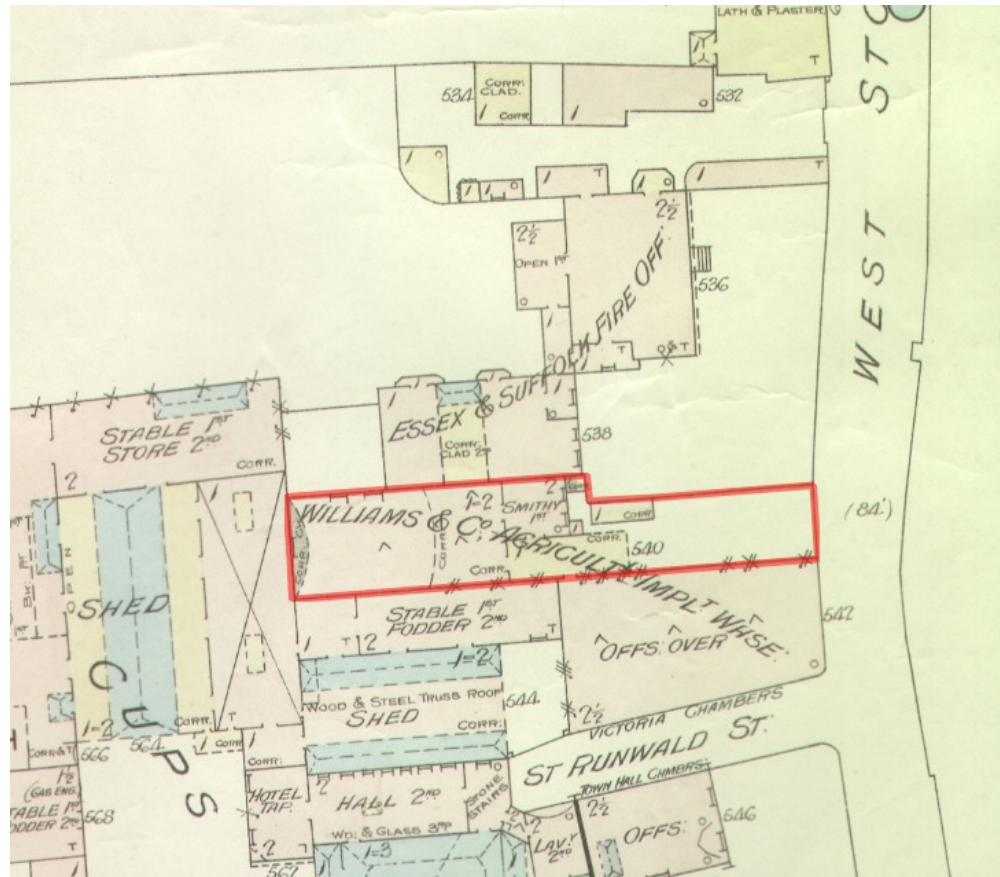


Fig 4 Insurance map, 1909.

The insurance map shows the 1830 house labelled as a smithy with the workshop extending from the west wall. South of the smithy, there is a rectangular structure that the map key indicates is constructed from timber. This equates to the covered yards. To the west of the 1830 house, the map shows a small rectangular wooden shed aligned along the northern boundary. On the map the complex is labelled as the 'Williams and Co Agricultural Implement Warehouse' and includes the ground floor of the 1883 Victoria Chambers, which, with its large windows, was probably used as a showroom.

5 Descriptive record (Figs 6-8)

The complex has three distinct phases, although there have been many alterations to the structures throughout its history. The individual buildings are described in the following text by phase. The earliest phase (Phase 1) dates to 1830 and consists of the brick house. Phase 2 consists of the large workshop west of the 1830 house and dates to 1876-97. Phase 3 is the wooden shed to the east of the converted 1830 house and dates to 1897-1903.

Phase 1: 1830 house

This is a two-storey building constructed of red brick with dimensions of 237 x 111 x 66mm laid in Flemish bond (Plate 1). Only the east wall and the lower portion of the south wall remain of the original fabric, the rest of the building, including the roof, has

been rebuilt in later materials. The east wall has identical doorways surmounted by shallow brick arches, indicating that the structure was divided into two dwellings. These entrances have been blocked by later brickwork. Between the doorways a wide window has been inserted, presumably replacing original windows. There are two window openings in the upper storey of this elevation, each with shallow brick arches identical to those over the doorways. The window frames are replacement casements with nine lights, rather than sash windows. A date brick with the inscription 'WR 1830' is located between these windows (Plate 2).

The south wall has a doorway partially inserted through a blocked window in the ground floor and a second blocked window towards the west (Plate 3). The first floor has been rebuilt in red brick with dimensions of 222 x 110 x 66mm laid in Flemish bond. This later wall includes an irregular-shaped window, which has subsequently been bricked-in (Plate 4). The gable has collapsed and been replaced with vertical sheets of corrugated iron.

The west wall is a later addition and is at an obtuse angle to the south wall. This has the effect of widening the house from 5.4m to 5.8m. The west wall has a wide doorway on the ground floor that has subsequently been bricked-in (Plate 5). The wall has been rendered and there is a small six-light metal-framed window below the eaves.

It was not possible to access the exterior of the north wall but the interior showed a brick wall laid in Flemish bond to a height of at least 1.5m. Above this the wall is formed by horizontal sheets of corrugated iron, which suggests that the wall above ground level has collapsed and been replaced in the same manner as the gable of the south wall.

The roof is gabled and constructed from corrugated iron sheeting over a timber frame that sits on the tops of the walls. The entirety of the roof structure appears to be a replacement.

The interior of the house showed that significant alterations have taken place since construction (Plate 6). As well as the changes to the external walls noted above, the first floor has been removed, along with wall dividing the house into two dwellings. Evidence for this can be seen as vertical brick scars in the east and west walls (Plates 7 and 8). As the west wall is a replacement wall, but still displays the scar of the dividing wall, this indicates that the west wall was altered before the first floor and dividing wall were removed.

Phase 2 Workshop

The workshop is a six-bay, open-plan, rectangular building, 19m long x 9m wide, with large-section timber posts that carry straight tie beams with straight braces. The original roof trusses appear to have been carried on king posts, but these have been removed (Plate 9). The timber-frame is independent of the brick walls of the properties to the north, south and west of the workshop and this suggests that the original frame was inserted into the open space between these buildings. The workshop has a later roof of corrugated iron sheeting carried on steel geometric trusses. This is not carried by the original tie beams but is instead supported on the surrounding walls. In places the surrounding walls have been built up or filled in to enclose the workshop. This is particularly obvious on the north wall where the width of the wall gets narrower towards the top and is then replaced by horizontal weatherboarding into which windows have been inserted (Plate 10). The four bays closest to the converted 1830 house each have a centrally located air vent in the ridge of the roof.

There is a possible access point from the building to the south into the workshop in the easternmost bay of the workshop. Four vertical planks cover an opening 1.12m wide x 1.93m high, which is either a window or more likely a door leading from the adjoining former Cups Hotel stable (Plate 11).

The walls of the workshop have been rendered and painted white and the floor is of concrete. In the north-east corner of the workshop, occupying the width of two bays, there is a large lead-lined pit sunk into the floor. The purpose of this pit is unknown and it may be an original feature of the workshop.

Phase 3 Wooden shed

This structure is a single-storey, mono-pitch shed, constructed from timber and consisting of an office and a kitchen (Plate 12). This is a very simple structure that has been repaired several times and has had two metal-framed windows inserted into the south elevation (Plate 13).

6 Discussion (Fig 8)

What, at first glance, appears to be an unremarkable late Victorian industrial site, does, upon closer scrutiny, have some very interesting features. To start with, the site is not just late Victorian in date, but has components that encompass the end of the Regency period, the Victorian era and the start of the Edwardian age. The earliest part of the complex is the house dating to 1830. This date is when the Regency period in architecture is considered to end and the Victorian age start. It is possible that the initials 'WR' on the date brick refer not to the owner/builder of the house but are instead short for *William Rex*, a reference to the accession of William IV in June 1830. However, the real interest in this building lies in its function. The two front doors indicate the house was divided into two dwellings and the rebuilt west wall, combined with the map evidence, suggests that the house originally extended further west. This could imply that the house was originally a back-to-back structure of four dwellings, each with a single room on the ground floor and a single bedroom on the first floor. The long structure to the west of the house, visible on Monson's map (Fig 1) may be the outhouses and coal stores belonging to the dwellings. If this theory is correct, then the house is a very early example of the domestic construction that took place in Colchester from the 1840's onwards, in response to the rise in the town's population.

The workshop is shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map but not the 1st and so must date to some point between 1876 and 1897. A closer date for the construction of the workshop and the conversion of the house is probably soon after 1883. The reason for this is the ownership of the complex. The insurance map of 1909 (Fig 4) shows the owner to be Williams and Co. H E Williams was an ironmonger and dealer in agricultural machinery who founded the company before 1882. On the insurance map the complex includes the ground floor of the Victoria Chambers, built in 1883, and it is likely that the workshop was constructed shortly afterwards (Plate 14). Under Williams and Co the ground floor of the house was converted to a smithy and the western half demolished to make way for the workshop (as shown on the insurance map). The replacement of the roof probably took place in the 20th century, possibly when capital was released by the merger of Williams and Co with H L Griffin and Co to form Williams and Griffin in 1963.

None of the structures are architecturally significant. Apart from what they can tell us about attitudes towards the construction of functional buildings in the periods represented, they are otherwise unremarkable. It is what they add to the social history of Colchester that makes them interesting. The house is one of the earliest examples of its type in Colchester and could arguably be termed slum housing. Many of the surrounding houses are of fine Georgian construction, such as St Martin's House, and this may explain why the house was set so far back from West Stockwell Street. But the fact that slum housing was constructed here shows that there was both a need for additional housing and profit to be made by building on available land. Colchester's population was expanding in the early part of the 19th century, but additional housing within the town walls at this time was characterised by the sub-division of existing properties. The house is, therefore, a rare example of a new build within the town walls, before large-scale extra-mural development took place from the 1840's onwards.

It was this extra-mural development (starting in the Chapel Street/West Street/South Street area around 1842 and continuing with the New town estates) that probably prompted the conversion of the house. If the conversion date of around 1883 is accurate, then this occurred at a time when better quality working class housing was available and the strain was easing on housing within the town walls. What is surprising about the house is not its existence, but its survival, and the fact

that it was not completely swept away but incorporated into the workshop. This perhaps reflects the Victorian values of thrift and enterprise which enabled H E Williams to build a family business that lasted better than eighty years and became part of a Colchester institution that is still in existence in the early 21st century.

7 Acknowledgments

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mills Whipp Projects Ltd for commissioning the building recording on behalf of Fenwick Ltd.

The building recording was carried out by Chris Lister.

The project was monitored by Martin Winter on behalf of Colchester Borough Council.

8 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14</i> , ed by D Gurney
IfA	2008	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
Mills Whipp Projects Ltd	2013	<i>St Runwald Street, Colchester, Historic Building Recording, Written Scheme of Investigation</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)

9 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
context	specific location on an archaeological site, especially one where finds are made
EHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
HE	Historic Environment
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
layer	distinct or distinguishable deposit of soil
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference
post	in wall frames vertical members which rise the full height of the frame, being either main posts at the bay divisions or intermediate posts within the bay
post-medieval	after Henry VIII to around the late 18th century

10 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but it will be permanently deposited with Colchester and Ipswich Museum under accession code COLEM 2013.7.

11 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

1 Introduction

1.1 Copy of WSI produced by CAT

1.2 Risk assessment

2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record.
- 2.2 Digital photographic contact sheet.
- 2.3 35mm black and white photographic record
- 2.4 35mm black and white photographic contact sheet
- 2.5 Attendance register
- 2.6 Site photographic record on CD
- 2.7 35mm black and white photographs and negatives – 1 packet

3 Research archive

- 3.1 Client report

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Distribution list

Fenwick Ltd
Mills Whipp Projects Ltd
Martin Winter, Colchester Borough Council Archaeological Officer
EHER



Colchester Archaeological Trust

Roman Circus House
Circular Road North,
Colchester,
Essex CO2 7GZ

tel.: 07436 273304
email: archaeologists@catuk.org

checked by: Philip Crummy
date: 20/08/13

Appendices
Appendix 1
Selected photographs



Plate 1 East elevation of the converted 1830 house - view west



Plate 2 East elevation of the converted 1830 house with the date brick circled – view west



Plate 3 South elevation of the converted 1830 house, showing the inserted doorway and blocked windows – view north-west



Plate 4 The rebuilt first floor wall of the converted 1830 house, showing the irregular-shaped window – view north



Plate 5 The replacement west wall of the converted 1830 house - view east



Plate 6 Interior of the converted 1830 house, showing the Williams and Co workshop
- view north-west



Plates 7 and 8 Evidence for the removed dividing wall in the converted 1830 house



Plate 9 Interior of the workshop, showing the original timber frame and the later roof
- view north-west



Plate 10 North wall of the workshop, showing the structure built on the adjoining property wall - view north



Plate 11 Possible entrance from former Cups Hotel stables into workshop – view north



Plate 12 The 20th-century mono-pitch shed - view west



Plate 13 Inserted metal-framed windows in the south wall of the wooden shed – view west



Plate 14 Painted sign on west wall of the Victoria Chambers – view east

Appendix 2

Full list of digital photographic record (images on accompanying CD)

- 001.jpg General site shot with the 20th-century office and covered yard to the foreground and the 1830 house to the rear - view west.
- 002.jpg General site shot with the 20th-century office and covered yard to the foreground and the 1830 house to the rear - view west.
- 003.jpg Interior of the covered yard outside the 20th-century office - view west.
- 004.jpg The covered yard and the 20th-century office with Crittall windows - view west.
- 005.jpg Detail of the roof structure over the covered yard.
- 006.jpg Interior of the office - view north-east.
- 007.jpg Interior of the kitchen - view north-west.
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- 009.jpg Folding doors of the workshop - view west.
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- 012.jpg Interior of the workshop - view north-east.
- 013.jpg Detail of window in the west wall of the workshop - view north.
- 014.jpg Angled straight braces to wall plate and tie beam of original workshop frame, with later roof structure above.
- 015.jpg Timber trusses of original workshop frame with later iron roof structure above - view east.
- 016.jpg Boarded-over opening in south wall of workshop - view south.
- 017.jpg Rebuilt wall of the converted house, with blocked doorway to the right - view east.
- 018.jpg Window in upper storey of the rebuilt wall to the converted house - view east.
- 019.jpg South wall of the converted house with inserted doorway - view north-west.
- 020.jpg Rebuilt upper storey of south wall with irregular-shaped window - view north.
- 021.jpg Detail of irregular window in rebuilt south wall - view north.
- 022.jpg East elevation of the converted house showing replacement window and blocked doorway of the north dwelling - view north-west.
- 023.jpg East elevation of the converted house showing blocked doorway of the south dwelling - view south-west.
- 024.jpg East elevation of the converted house showing the blocked doorway of the south dwelling and the replacement window - view west.
- 025.jpg Interior of the converted house - view north.
- 026.jpg Interior of the converted house showing the replacement window and the blocked doorway of the south dwelling.
- 027.jpg Interior of the converted house showing the rebuilt west wall and the scar of the removed dividing wall - view west.
- 028.jpg Posters showing industrial regulations indicating workshop usage - view west.
- 029.jpg Detail of the scar of the removed dividing wall in the rebuilt west wall - view west.
- 030.jpg Scar of removed dividing wall in the east wall - view east.
- 031.jpg Blocked doorway to the north dwelling - view north-east.
- 032.jpg The east wall of the converted house showing the blocked doorways flanking the replacement window - view east.
- 033.jpg Sign on the west wall of the Victoria Chambers - view east.
- 034.jpg West elevation of the workshop with the gable built on top of the former wall of the stables associated with the Cups Hotel - view east.
- 035.jpg West gable of the workshop - view east.
- 036.jpg West gable of the workshop built on top of the Cups Hotel stable wall - view north-east.
- 037.jpg East elevation of the converted house during demolition - view west.
- 038.jpg East elevation of the converted house during demolition - view west.
- 039.jpg East elevation of the converted house during demolition - view west.
- 040.jpg Upper storey of the converted house during demolition with the date brick visible between the two windows - view west.
- 041.jpg East elevation of the converted house during demolition showing the brick-built WC - view west.

Appendix 3

Full list of 35mm black and white photographic record (images on accompanying CD, negatives with archive folder)

- b&w001.jpg General site shot with the 20th-century office and covered yard to the foreground and the 1830 house to the rear - view west.
- b&w002.jpg General site shot with the 20th-century office and covered yard to the foreground and the 1830 house to the rear - view west.
- b&w003.jpg The covered yard and the 20th-century office with Crittall windows - view west.
- b&w004.jpg Interior of the workshop - view west.
- b&w005.jpg Interior of the workshop - view east.
- b&w006.jpg Interior of the workshop - view north-east.
- b&w007.jpg Angled straight braces to wall plate and tie beam of original workshop frame, with later roof structure above.
- b&w008.jpg Detail of window in the west wall of the workshop - view north.
- b&w009.jpg Boarded-over opening in south wall of workshop - view south.
- b&w010.jpg South wall of the converted house with inserted doorway - view north-west.
- b&w011.jpg East elevation of the converted house showing replacement window and blocked doorway of the north dwelling - view north-west.
- b&w012.jpg East elevation of the converted house showing blocked doorway of the south dwelling - view south-west.
- b&w013.jpg Interior of the converted house - view north.
- b&w014.jpg Detail of the scar of the removed dividing wall in the rebuilt west wall - view west.
- b&w015.jpg The east wall of the converted house showing the blocked doorways flanking the replacement window - view east.
- b&w016.jpg Sign on the west wall of the Victoria Chambers - view east.
- b&w017.jpg West gable of the workshop built on top of the Cups Hotel stable wall - view north-east.



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Fig 5 Site location.



Fig 6 Plan of the site showing the location and orientation of photographs included in the report.

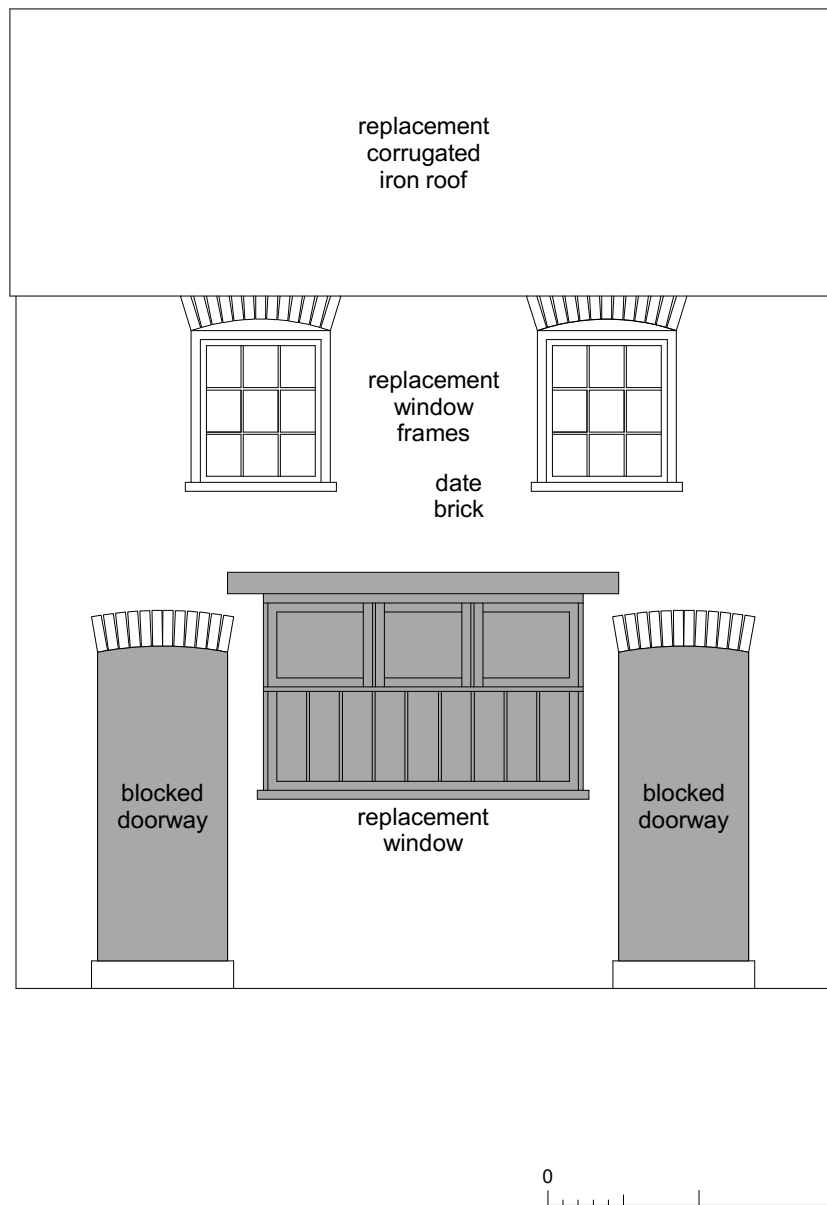
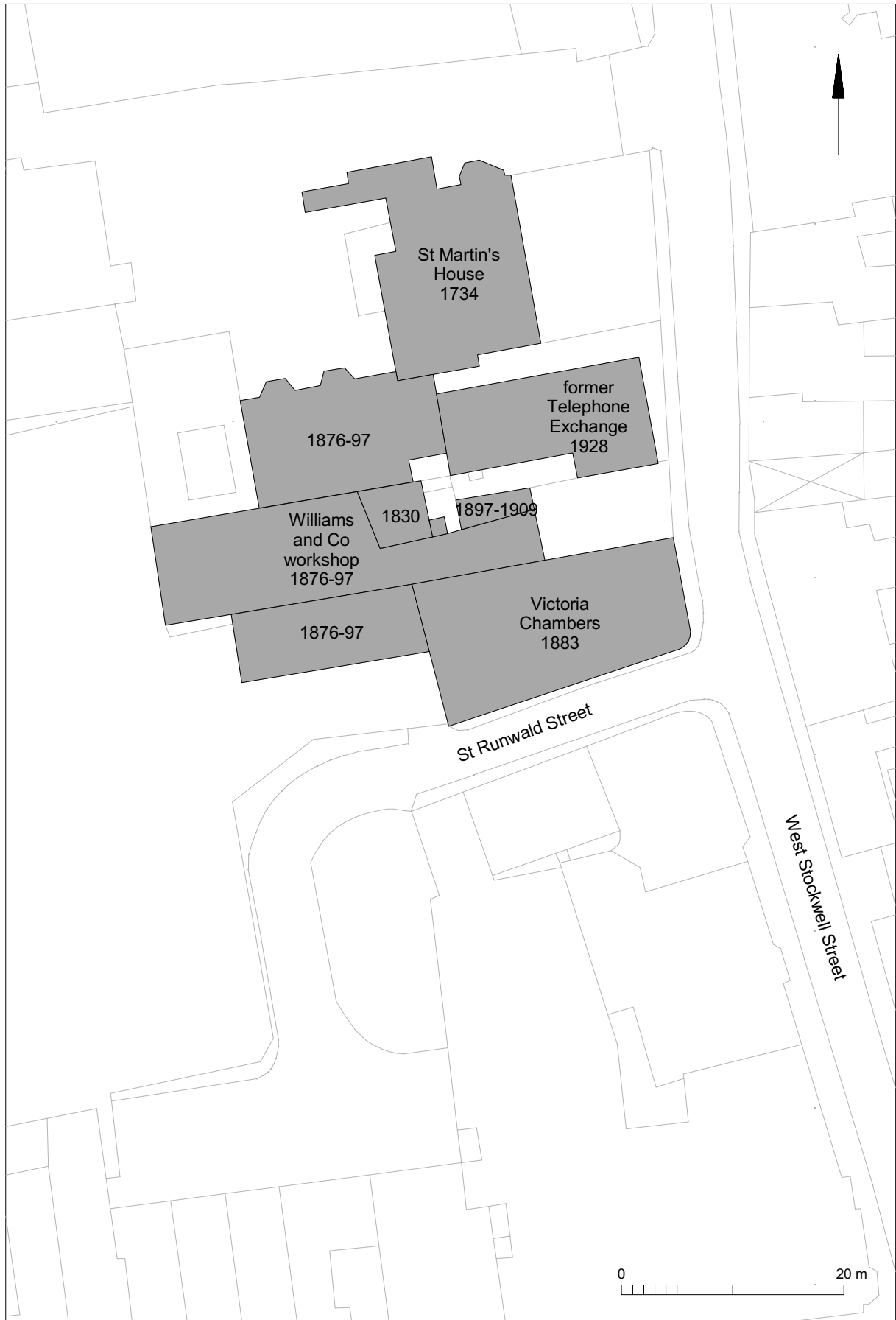


Fig 7 East elevation of the converted 1830 house, with later alterations shaded grey.



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Fig 8 Site phasing.

Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

Summary sheet

Address: Workshop off West Stockwell Street, Colchester, Essex	
Parish: St Martin's	District: Colchester
NGR: TL 9956 2529 (c)	Site codes: CAT project – 13/03a Museum accession – COLEM 2013.7
Type of work: Building recording	Site director/group: Colchester Archaeological Trust
Date of work: March 2013	Size of area investigated: n/a
Location of curating museum: Colchester and Ipswich Museum	Funding source: Client
Monitored by: Martin Winter of Colchester Borough Council	
Further seasons anticipated? No	Related EHER numbers: -
Final report:	CAT Report 691
Periods represented:	19th-20th century
Summary: <i>A programme of building recording was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on a complex of buildings off West Stockwell Street, Colchester, Essex in March 2013. Mills Whipp Projects Ltd on behalf of Fenwick Ltd commissioned the work. The complex comprises the rare remains of an example of early urban housing expansion in Colchester, dating to 1830 (later converted to a workshop), a large workshop dating to the last quarter of the 19th century and a small, single-storey structure dating to the start of the 20th century, all associated with a small-scale industrial undertaking. This industry was set up by Williams and Co, the forerunner of the landmark Colchester business, Williams and Griffin.</i>	
Previous summaries/reports: none	
Keywords: workshop, Regency house	Significance: *
Author of summary: Chris Lister	Date of summary: August 2013