

Building recording at Brintons Buildings, Exchange Street, Kidderminster



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Tim Cornah

Summary

Building recording was carried out to satisfy a planning condition relating to the redevelopment of the Brintons Buildings at Exchange Street, Kidderminster.

A brief for the works identified that the buildings should be recorded to English Heritage specified standards. This required photographing the exterior and interior of the building and annotating existing survey drawings to produce an archive of the Brintons Buildings before any changes were made to the building.

Historical research and synthesis was also carried out. Original records relating to the site were studied at Worcestershire Archives along with historic maps. Digitised historic mapping, aerial photographs and other online sources were accessed.

Analysis of the buildings was based upon the recorded fabric and documentary research. The development of the buildings was reconstructed and illustrated on phased ground plans.

The Brintons Buildings initially present themselves as an ornate company headquarters built within an Italianate style in 1876, as made clear by the headstone above the front door. This is complete with the Brintons family crest and motto. Further down Exchange Street another date stone shows that the style of the 1876 building was continued into a 1926 extension with remarkable care to visually match the style and materials. A further extension carried the style south along Exchange Street with the same care of detailing in 1928, though this was not commemorated.

These façades well represent the complexity of the building that has been hidden by later works. In total, the buildings were made up of nine separate phases, possibly dating from the earliest date of the company moving to the site in 1819. The majority of the early buildings are utilitarian and industrial in character. The 1876 phase is the earliest existing phase from which the buildings specifically used as offices and show rooms. Phases of 1926 and 1928 and 1950s extended the offices and show rooms, whilst incorporating or removing the earlier buildings. These latter phases retained only the façade and were otherwise very utilitarian in design apart from some interior cladding within the respective showrooms. By the 1960s, the buildings were increasingly split up into individual offices along with some industrial spaces.

Report

1 Background

1.1 Reasons for the project

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Brintons Buildings, Exchange, Street, Kidderminster, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83145 76515). It was commissioned by Mr Dan Stiff of BB Architecture and Planning Ltd. The development comprises partial demolition with reconstruction and alterations including riverside walkway and changes of use to whole premises to use classes A1/A3/A4/A5 in up to 6 units at ground floor level but including any levels above forming part of such units, with use classes A2/ B1/C1/D2 to all upper floors including any parts at ground floor related to units at upper levels. A planning application has been submitted to Wyre Forest District Council (reference WF/14/0390) and granted subject to conditions including the requirement for historic building recording.

The building is a Grade II designated heritage asset, within the terms used by the *National Planning Policy Framework*. The building is also registered with the Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (WSM35974).

The project conforms to the generic brief as prepared by Worcestershire County Council (WCC 2014) and for which a project proposal (including detailed specification) was produced (WA 2014).

The project also conforms to the *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (ClfA 2014), *Standards and guidelines for archaeological projects in Worcestershire* (WCC 2010).

The event reference for this project, given by the HER is WSM67186.

2 Aims

The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists defines the aims of building recording as 'a programme of work intended to establish the character, history, dating, form and archaeological development of a specified building' (Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures, ClfA 2014a).

The aims and scope of the project, as detailed in the Brief (Section 3), are as follows:

- Provide a descriptive and illustrative account and interpretation of the building / structure, including discussion of its local, regional and national significance.

3 Methods

3.1 Personnel

The project was undertaken by Timothy Cornah (BA (hons.) MSc); who joined Worcestershire Archaeology in 2006 and has been practicing archaeology since 2004. The project manager responsible for the quality of the project was Tom Rogers (BA (Hons) Msc). Illustrations were prepared by Carolyn Hunt (BSc (hons.); PG Cert; MCIfA).

3.2 Documentary research

Prior to fieldwork commencing a search was made of the Historic Environment Record (HER).

3.3 List of sources consulted

Cartographic sources

- 1841 Tithe Map
- Ordnance Survey Maps dated 1885, 1904, 1926-7 and 1938 (Figures 2 to 5)

Aerial photographs

- Historic England, Britain from Above website- EPW033978 (1930)
- Historic England, Britain from Above website- EPW037603 (1936) (Figure 7)

Documentary sources

Published and grey literature sources are listed in the bibliography.

- Insurance Plans Chas E Goad 1897, 1904 (WRO f899:156.73 BA 6313) and 1943 (WRO f251:2 BA 6254) (Figure 6)
- Wyre Forest Council planning archives documents from 1928 (WRO r498 BA 8895/141 (vi))

3.4 Fieldwork strategy

A detailed specification has been prepared by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA 2014).

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 17th and 24th August 2015. The site reference number and site code is WSM35974.

Building recording consisted of a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the buildings, analysis of their development and annotation of existing survey drawings. All photographs were taken with photographic scales visible in each shot, where possible. The photographic survey was carried out with a Sony α350 digital SLR camera and recorded on a pro-forma Photographic Record Sheet. Annotation of existing ground plans and elevations, and completion of pro-forma Building Record and Building Phase sheets, complemented the photographic record.

The project conforms to the specification for a Level 3 survey as defined in the English Heritage document *Understanding historic buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (EH 2006). This level of survey is described as ‘an analytical record’ comprising of ‘an introductory description followed by a systematic account of the buildings origins, development and use’ (EH 2006). This required the following elements of survey.

Survey and drawings

- Plans of all main floors and elevations as existing (provided by client).
- Measured drawings showing the form of any architectural or functional detail not more readily captured by photography.

Photography

- Overall appearance of rooms and circulation areas.
- Detailed coverage of the building’s external appearance.
- Any detail, structural or decorative, relevant to the building’s design, development and use, which does not show on general photographs.

3.5 Building analysis

Analysis of the building was based on the study of the photographic record, building recording forms and annotated drawings. It was also informed by the documentary sources listed above. This allowed plans to be drawn up showing the structural development of the building.

The building as recorded is depicted in Plates 1 to 97. Ground plans, phase plans, elevations and sections have been reproduced as Figures 8 to 12.

3.6 Statement of confidence in the methods and results

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. The only caveat to this is that a few rooms, such as G49, G15 and F34 could not be accessed. However, this did not prevent the overall phasing and character of the building from being established.

4 Context

Kidderminster lies at a height of between 35m and 50m OD on the west and east banks of the River Stour. The Church [of St Mary and All Saints] sits on top of the sandstone ridge overlooking the river. Kidderminster grew-up at a crossing point of the River Stour, on an important route-way between the Midlands and Wales. A minster was founded in the vicinity during the eighth century and Kidderminster was of sufficient importance to be mentioned in the Domesday (Robson-Glyde 2009).

Kidderminster has been known for its textile industry since the medieval period. This success of the industry was due in part to the river which supplied water for washing and dyeing the wool and also, given that the local geology was sandstone, the ability to build right up to the river edge. Thus tenement plots of the medieval period ran down to the river (Buteux 1996, 6-7). The textile industry reached its peak with the carpet companies of the late 19th centuries. A large amount of research in the carpet industries of Kidderminster has already been carried out. Of particular importance are the documents produced by Legat (1990) and Thompson (2002) among others.

Worcestershire Historic Environment Record hold a significant amount of information within a 500m radius. This are summarised here in order to gain an understanding of the site context.

Whilst there are a handful of find spots from within the area that suggest activity from the prehistoric and Roman periods, it was not until the medieval era that the current town began to develop. The early town appears to have been centred on and to the south of the Church of St Marys (WSM01303) which is thought to have been a minster prior to the Norman Conquest. The extant church has structural features dating from the 13th century onwards. To the south was a system of roads (WSM20752) which are thought to have a medieval origin. These include Church Street, High Street, Blackwell Street, Mill Street, Vicar Street, Worcester Street and Coventry Street. These may have been surrounded by elements of tenement. Few buildings of this period remain, the only other outside the church yard being Caldwell Hall which dates to the 15th century (WSM00278). There are other monuments such as crosses, former buildings, and a tithe barn recorded that further illuminate the character of the medieval town.

It was within the post-medieval period that town developed into the form in which it remained until the mid 20th Century. The areas of tenement expanded to the north-east at this time, particularly along Dudley Street. The character of early post-medieval Kidderminster can only really still be seen along Church Street. Number 12 Church Street dates to 1601 (WSM16976) whilst the remainder date to the 18th and 19th centuries. However, given the reputation of Kidderminster as a textile town at this point, it is likely there were numerous small partially domestic, partially industrial buildings that no longer survive. One such building that does remain, though outside the study area, is at 20-22 Horsefair (WSM33616). This had a domestic function on the ground and first floor along with a workshop on the second floor. This type of building is likely to have been widespread before the centralised industry which developed in the late 18th century but became ubiquitous in the 19th century.

The heavy industry of the 19th century is clearly represented within the Historic Environment Record, not only in terms of remaining buildings but also now removed monuments. These are largely centred on the western and southern side of the of the town centre along the course of the Stour and the Staffordshire and Worcester Canal which opened in 1772 (WSM12001). Numerous 19th century carpet factories are mentioned such as Tomkinsons Carpet Factory (WSM38287), Wharf Mills Carpet Works (WSM19982), Worcester Cross Carpet Factory (WSM36243), Pike Mills

Carpet Factory (WSM16965), Chlidema Carpet Factory (WSM12904), Slingfield Mill (WSM19987) and Stour Vale Mills (WSM12905). Along with these are an iron foundry, gas works and a tannery.

More specifically relevant to the company of Brintons are the buildings, monuments and activities listed in Table 1 below. These show a large expansion of the company from a time period that relates closely to Phase 2 of the building as described below.

Table 1 Sites relating to Brintons

HER Ref	Name	Description	Dates	OS Ref
Buildings				
WSM 33936	Piano Building, Brintons Carpet Works	Carpet factory Wool warehouse	1867	SO 82988 76477
WSM 35974	Brintons Factory Offices	Factory	1876	SO 83113 76507
Activities				
WSM 12918	Behind Brintons Carpet Works	Spanish Olive Jar found in River Stour	1700-1799	SO 83076 76519
WSM 34072	Brintons Carpet Works	Building recording in 2001 Carpet Factory	1850-2001	SO 83038 76434
WSM 39544	Piano Building, Weavers Wharf	Photo survey	-	SO 82989 76477
Monuments				
WSM 12900	Site of 'A' shed, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Ordnance factory	1700-2000 1939-1945	SO 83100 76500
WSM 19977	Site 'C' shed, Brintons Carpets	Carpet Factory Spinning shed Ordnance factory	1873-2002 1873-2002 1939-1945	SO 83024 76404
WSM 19979	Site of dye house 1, Brintons Carpets	Dye House Carpet factory Ordnance factory	1899-2002 1801-2002 1939-1945	SO 83069 76578
WSM 19994	Site of dye house, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Dye house Ordnance factory	1800-2000 1830-2002 1939-1945	SO 83092 76528
WSM 33917	Site of dye house 2, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Dye house Ordnance factory	1899-2000 1899-2002 1939-1945	SO 83064 76524
WSM 33918	Site of engine house, Brintons	Carpet factory Engine house	1850-2002 1850-2000	SO 83103 76516
WSM 33929	Site of part of Brintons North	Carpet factory Ordnance factory	1850-2002 1939-1945	SO 83080 76509
WSM 33932	Site of starch house, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory	1870-2002	SO 83061 76490
WSM 33933	Site of 'The	Carpet factory	1855-2002	SO 83061

	Mill', Brintons Carpets			76490
WSM 33934	Site of chimney, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Chimney	1870-2002 1870-2002	SO 83016 76499
WSM 33935	Site of boiler house, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Boiler house	1869-2002 1869-2002	SO 83010 76445
WSM 33938	Site of range of buildings between 'B' & 'C' sheds, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Engine house Ordnance factory	1879-2002 1879-2002 1939-1945	SO 83024 76430
WSM 33940	Site of 'D' shed, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Spinning shed Ordnance factory	1873-2002 1873-2002 1939-1945	SO 83036 76365
WSM 33942	Site of yarn store and Axminster winding loom, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory	1873-2001	SO 83083 76369
WSM 33943	Site of starch house, Brintons Carpets	Starch House	-	SO 83071 76382
WSM 33948	Site of over-entrance building, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory	1901-2000	SO 83101 76464
WSM 33949	Site of original main block, Waterside Mill	Carpet factory	1927-2001	SO 83108 76463
WSM 33950	Site of warehouse, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory	1862-2001	SO 83114 76425
WSM 33951	Site of 'G' shed, Brintons Carpets	Carpet factory Ordnance factory	1924-2001 1939-1945	SO 83130 76407
WSM 37085	Site of carpet factory between Vicar Street and River Stour	Carpet factory	1800-1950	SO 83116 76569

5 The building

5.1 Historical information

Members of the Brintons family are thought to have been making carpets from 1770 as at this time Samuel Brinton is recorded as Brussels carpets (ref)?. By 1783, his cousin William Brinton had started carpet manufacture at Mill Street in Kidderminster (van Laun 1999) whilst retaining a base at Hill Pool Mill in Chaddesley Corbet. William Brinton's, son Henry, moved the company to Exchange Street in around 1819. The site Henry Brinton bought was only three quarters of an acre (Brintons company leaflet) whilst the current complex covers quarter of an acre. The company expanded to a large degree under the direction of Henry Brinton, probably introducing power looms in the 1850s. By the time of his death, the company employed 600 people and was the largest employer in the town (van Laun 1999).

The company continued to expand through the 19th century and in 1872 a 50,000 square foot shed was built for tapestry weaving. Much of their success came from being at the technological forefront, particularly with power looms, for which they filed a patent for the Gripper Axminster loom in 1890. By the turn of the 20th century, there were about 1,200 employees and the company installed a 120 horse power steam engine, known as Hercules to power the machinery. This expansion continued through the 20th century with the installation of further buildings and equipment (van Laun 1999).

During the Second World War, the company suspended carpet production in order to aid the war effort, only to recommence in 1946 (Brintons carpets woven for two centuries 1786-1983). During this time the company made various items of equipment and ordnance and was particularly known for Jerri cans, of which it made 861,491. After the war restrictions were lifted, the carpet industry was resurgent particularly with the construction of new housing, both in the town and nationwide. This continued up to the 1970s when there was increasing uncertainty in carpet manufacture within Kidderminster, though by this time the company had established themselves within the smaller, upper end of the market. By the 1990s, Brintons had become increasingly international with factories in Portugal and India as well as in Greenville, Mississippi in 1998. This corresponded with increasing closure of the town centre facilities, ultimately leaving the buildings recorded here as administrative centre only (Thompson 2002).

5.2 Building development

The development of the building is illustrated on Figures 8 to 12 and on the Plates listed individually below. Room numbers are also listed on Figures 8 to 12 and are mentioned where appropriate below. The location of individual plates are also illustrated on Figures 8 to 12.

5.2.1 Phase 1: 1819 to mid-19th century

The only building representing this phase is a small two storey, two bay brick building, Plate 1, rooms Y2b and GF1. It assigned to this phase due to the arch headed and fanlight windows as shown on Plate 2. These windows are commonly seen on late 18th century buildings throughout Kidderminster (Robson-Glyde 2009), though they continued to be installed in to the middle of the 19th century on industrial buildings, as shown by the Stour Vale Mill which was built in 1855. It is possible that it dates to before Brintons moved to the site 1819, though seems unlikely.

Whilst only two bays remain, this building formerly extended to the east, as shown on Plate 3, by the presence of a further arched window. A further such window formerly existed in its southern end on the ground floor, Plate 4, one on the first floor facing east alongside a contemporary door and a further facing west, Plate 5. The lintels of these are of a different style and may be more relevant to Phase 2. The tile roof is supported by a single king post truss, Plate 6. The function of this building remains unclear, though the 1904 Goad map (WRO f899:156.73 BA 6313), Figure 6, labels it as a machinery store. Its ground floor was converted to a garage by the time of the 1943 Goad map (WRO f251:2 BA 6254), Figure 6.

5.2.2 Phase 2 Middle to late 19th century

During this phase, two further bays were probably added on to the northern end of the building discussed in Phase 1, Y2 and GF1. This was partly a rebuild at ground floor level and also involved a slight change in the roof height, Plate 7. This building was also slate tiled and supported by a further kingpost truss, Plate 8. These two buildings were sited on the eastern side of the culvert of the River Stour, as shown on the 1904 Goad map and a drawing of 1928 (WRO r498 BA8895141vi)

On the western side of the culvert were a range of other buildings, as shown in Figure 8. These are largely only represented by their eastern walls, formerly on the western side of the culvert. It is likely that the northernmost element of this formed a separate building (this formerly had a foot print in area similar to rooms G34 to G41 in Figure 8), with a former gable end at its south, Plate 9. This gable end may have had a fireplace built into it as the wall is thicker in its central element, though no such feature was visible. No chimney is visible on its gable in a 1936 aerial photograph (Historic England EWP037603). This building is visibly single-storey within the photograph, this being confirmed as it remains to single storey level, Plate 10. However, a plan of 1935 (AOC 2001, Fig 8) shows this building as having a first floor. This first floor is not marked on the 1943 Goad plan so its former presence or otherwise remains anomalous.

This building had evenly-spaced low arch headed windows, Plate 11, and a wider arch headed doorway, Plate 12. The aerial photograph also shows this eastern wall running into another building to the north, though this distinction was not visible on site. These buildings were together labelled with a function as carpet warehouses and packing on the 1904 Goad plan.

The eastern wall continues to the south, and is considered to of broadly the same period given the same arch headed windows, Plate 13. This appears to have been another single storey building and is also visible within the aerial photograph in 1936. It is similarly labelled as warehouse and packing in 1904.

This wall continues still further south into an area that is labelled in 1904 as a weaving shed. This ran across the full width of the site as far as Exchange Street and over the River Stour culvert. This enclosed rooms Y6 and G48, but originally continued much further to the west. These were single storey buildings with unequally pitched roofs typical of many such warehouses and sheds in Kidderminster, Plate 14 and Plate 15. The steeper elements contained glass windows. These were all held on east to west aligned wall plates, in turn supported by steel columns. Brintons is recorded as having built four large sheds between 1870 and 1879 for weaving and spinning (Brintons carpets woven for two centuries, 1783-1983) and it is likely that these date to this time.

Within the south west corner of the site was a further building of this period, Plate 16, and is labelled as rooms G46 and F38. Although this appears to be a single storey building on the aerial photograph, its ground floor is lowered sufficiently to accommodate a first floor. It is also brick built with low arched door and window heads, similar to the other buildings of this phase. The roof is made up of four bays, spanned by three king post trusses, Plate 17. The intermediate floor appears to be original, Plate 18. Both the aerial photograph and the 1904 plan show this building extending to both the north and south and is labelled in 1904 as being used as a card room on the ground floor with "picking" on the first floor. Also on the first floor are two bases attached to the wall which may have related to machinery used there, Plate 19.

5.2.3 Phase 3 1876

This phase saw a major remodelling of the site with the construction of three storey building at its northern end, Plate 20, Plate 21 and Plate 22. This is clearly dated to 1876 due to a date stone above the door, Plate 23, which also has the monogram JB and Co above. This stands for John Briton and Company, as it was named at this period. Above this is an inscription which reads "lux est salus" which is Latin for Light is Salvation. This is also the Brintons family motto and the crest above also derives from the family. The building was designed by JT Meridith whose offices were

on the opposite side of Exchange Street (Brooks and Pevsner 2007) and employed a broadly Italianate style.

The exterior frontage was brick built with yellow limestone string courses at each floor and wall plate level. These were moulded apart from at the second floor level where they were plain. The stone detailing continued into the doors and windows, the most ornate use being around the front door. This door is curved and recessed with limestone pillars either side and a balustrade above, Plate 24. Details of the mouldings of the front door can be seen in Figure 13. The windows of the ground and first floors were arch-headed with ornamental keystones and ground and second floor windows had ornamental aprons below the windows. The windows were generally paired with brick pilasters running from ground to wall plate level occasional breaking this sequence.

The overall layout and ornate style of this phase supports its use as offices at this point. This style is continued into the immediate lobby area with a mosaic which repeated the JB and Co monogram, Plate 25 and Plate 26. Immediately to the left was a reception, made up of rooms G3 and G4, which was fitted with a fireplace, Plate 27. Rooms G9, G10 and G16 were similarly furnished with fireplaces, Plate 28, Plate 29, Plate 30 and Plate 31. Room G6, Plate 32, may have been originally similarly furnished, but it has not been retained. All of these rooms are labelled on the 1904 Goad plan as offices. Details of mouldings in rooms G11a and G12 can be seen in Figure 13 and details of architrave mouldings are shown in Plate 33. The windows throughout are sashes, mostly without any central glazing bars.

The exact plan of much of the rest of the ground floor at this time is unclear given that rooms G8, G12 and G14 underwent heavy alteration, probably in Phase 6, Plate 34 and Plate 35. The 1904 plan suggests that this space was covered, possibly within a similar style to the earlier phase weaving shed and also used as offices with windows in its southern wall.

Room G15 was used until recently as a safe and was locked at the time of survey so could not be accessed. The safe door, Plate 36, was made by James Felton Elwell of The Vulcan Works in Birmingham. Though the exact date of this door cannot be ascertained, the company was established in 1855 so it is possible that this is original to this phase. Passage way G17 led to an external door, visible in Plate 37, and G46 contained stairs to the first floor, though the stairs remaining appear to be 20th century concrete replacements, Plate 38.

The main first floor access was from room G11 which had an ornamental mahogany staircase, Plate 39 and Plate 40, whilst G11 remained in use as a toilet. The mouldings of the staircase handrail can be seen in Figure 13. The staircase led to the first floor only with two further toilets leading off from a landing. On the first floor rooms F6 and F7, Plate 41, had fireplaces and are likely to have been further offices. Rooms F1 to F3, Plate 42, made up a single room that was labelled as a showroom on the 1904 plan.

The second floor was accessed from the stair well at the west end of room F1. Rooms S26 to S28b, Plate 43, were one large room. Originally visible from this room were four queen post trusses with chamfer detailing, false ceiling was visible above the collar level of these trusses, along with spaces for window lights, Plate 44 and Plate 45. With the structure of the building visible in this way, a more industrial use for this large space is envisioned. This is confirmed by it being labelled as sewing room on the 1904 plan, along with room S29, Plate 46. The roof structure is also visible above the latter room with four queen post trusses spanning it. There are two further identical trusses within this room though these cover the Phase 4 extension. It is likely that these are a copy of those erected in 1876 as the 1936 aerial photograph shows a change in the room at this point. Decorative vent covers can also be seen from within this room, Plate 47.

5.2.4 Phase 4 1926

The façade of the 1926 extension is remarkably similar to that of the Phase 3 building. The exterior that faces onto Exchange Street, Plate 48, is initially only distinguishable due to a difference in the colour of the bricks. A date stone above this section, Plate 49, clearly distinguishes its date. The initials RSB stand for Reginald Seymour Brinton, who was chairman of the company at that time.

The windows were outwardly the same sashes as in Phase 3 but had an industrial solution for opening the small windows above below the arch lintel. A few of these were also retrofitted into the Phase 3 building where the best example survives, Plate 50 and Plate 51.

Behind this façade, the building is of an extremely different character. This is particularly evident within the range that runs to the west which built externally from brick with large square windows, Plate 52. The internal floors were of concrete construction and supported across the building with steel girders. This range was largely only built with a ground and first floor, and had a flat concrete roof, as is visible in the 1936 aerial photograph. The exception to this is the area immediately behind the façade where a second storey was constructed. This extended room S29 from phase 29, and the extra queen post trusses were added.

The ground floor of the western range was made up of two rooms. The larger of these comprised of those labelled G20 to G28, Plate 53, Plate 54 and Plate 55, and was divided during Phase 8. A further small room labelled G31 and G32, Plate 56, existed to the west. Both of these rooms were floored with oak herringbone tiles, Plate 57, and a 1928 plan suggests they were offices (WRO r498 BA8895141vi). Similarly on the first floor, the rooms labelled F9 to F20 were one open space and labelled in 1928 as a show room, Plate 58 and Plate 59. The further room to the west, labelled F21 and F28, was one space but remodelled during Phase 6. The 1928 plan shows steps from the western gable in room F28, presumably leading to the ground floor level.

5.2.5 Phase 5 1928

This phase is similar to Phase 4 in that the façade is nearly indistinguishable from that constructed in both phases 3 and 4, but had structures of a very industrial character to the rear. This phase almost entirely matches the drawings shown on the plans prepared by Pritchard and Godwin Architects in 1928 (WRO r498 BA8895141vi).

Only one significant addition to the style of the façade looking onto Exchange Street is the addition of a vehicle entrance although this has a similar arch head which maintains the general appearance, Plate 60 and Plate 61. This vehicle entrance led into a yard labelled as Y1 to Y2, Plate 62. Y1 was underneath the first floor of the building which was constructed with very large steel girders, brick and concrete, Plate 62. There was a room, Y3 which joined onto the Phase 1 building, Plate 63, which was labelled on the plans as an experimental room. To the south of this room was a toilet and a hoist that went as far as the second floor. To the north of the Phase 1 building a half bay building, G30, was added for typists, Plate 64 and Plate 65. Further to this was another toilet immediately to the right after entering the vehicle bay.

The first floor was accessed from either the hoist or internally through the Phase 3 and 4 buildings. There was also a gangway which led from the western range over the Stour culvert which remained open at this date. This appears to have been removed in the latter half of the 20th century. Room F35, Plate 66, was a further show room F37 and F37a was a single store room, Plate 67. The second floor was accessed by the spiral staircase and hoist in room F36, Plate 68 and Plate 69.

The second floor of this phase did not extend over the western range and consisted of a single store room made up of rooms S30 to S32, Plate 70. Also visible are the steel roof trusses which are markedly different of the two previous phases to the north, Plate 46. All of this phase is clearly visible externally on the 1936 aerial photograph.

5.2.6 Phase 6 1935

This phase saw a small amount of remodelling, particularly in the décor of the boardroom, G6, in which walnut panelling was added along with a cloakroom and WC, G7, Plate 32. The panelling was fitted with cupboards, complete with brass fittings and knobs. These changes were commemorated on a plaque by the fireplace, Plate 71.

A plan of the Brintons works at this date also shows room G8 as it remained at the time of recording, with some of the Phase 3 structure removed to accommodate a large waiting room.

Though the panelling and décor cannot be precisely dated to 1935, it seems likely that it happened at this time, Plate 34.

5.2.7 Phase 7 1940s to 1950s

The next phase saw a significant change and remodelling, mainly on the western side, but also within the Phase 3 structure. These changes certainly post-date the Goad insurance plan dating to 1943 which illustrates that the Phase 2 buildings were remaining at this point. Similarly, the buildings of this phase are of two storeys and are not visible on the 1936 aerial photograph. They are attributed as dating up to the 1950s due to the style of the interior decor, as discussed below.

The exterior of the main building of this phase, Plate 72, was made up of polychrome brickwork with pilasters that ran from the ground to wall plate height. Between these rectangular metal framed windows of an industrial type on the ground floor and wood frame rectangular windows on the first floor. The second floor is attributed to Phase 8, due to the change in the brick work at this point. The eastern wall of this new building reused the some of the structure attributed to Phase 2.

At the level of each floor, concrete lintels can be seen externally. These correspond internally with latitudinal steel girders and poured concrete floors, Plate 73. The single external door may be a later addition, as is the lift tower at the southern end. This lift tower is attributed to broadly the same phase, due to the similarity of style as it uses the same polychrome brick work and concrete lintels over the windows. What exactly the fifth floor of this lift accessed is unclear as the Phase 7 buildings on its fourth floor clearly butt the tower and are therefore later. This lift shaft can be seen internally in Plate 74.

The ground floor of this structure appears to have been one single room for which the purpose remains unclear though industrial or administrative purposes seem likely, Plate 75. Kitchen G46a was probably also added at this time, Plate 76.

Above these was a further showroom, Plate 77 and Plate 78, which was wood-panelled, F22. It was accessed internally through room F4 from the phase 3 show room, Plate 79, as well as from the Phase 4 showroom through room F21, Plate 80. It had built-in heating and cupboards, the latter for storing carpets samples. Rooms F23 to F27 were a single room and similarly wood panelled, detailing of which can be seen in Plate 81.

5.2.8 Phase 8 1950s to 1960s

This phase saw the construction of a two storey extension to the south of the Phase 7 structures, as well as the addition of a second floor onto the Phase 7 and Phase 4 structures. The main structure can be seen externally on Plate 82 and Plate 83, and the additional storey can be seen on Plate 52 and Plate 72. These appear to be of much the same period due to the similarity of the brickwork and the concrete apron that runs all the way around at eaves level.

The main structure was added to the south of the Phase 7 lift tower and consisted of a poured concrete frame structure, in-filled with rectangular panels of brick and simple rectangular metal framed windows. As with all of the other buildings of this phase, it had a flat roof.

The floors were supported internally on steels with further poured concrete floors. It had a staircase connecting all the storeys within the south west corner, Plate 84, with toilets on the intermediate, half floors, Plate 85. The ground floor was made up of three rooms of which of which G43 and G44 were offices, Plate 86. G48 could not be accessed during this project. On the first floor were a further three rooms of which F32 was a passage way, Plate 87, F30 may have been an office, Plate 88, with F34 being a further office, Plate 89. On the second floor, rooms s2 to s7 were also offices, Plate 90.

Within the additional floor over the Phase 4 and 7 structures, this may have made up one large space initially but was probably quickly divided into rooms S9 to S23, Plate 91, Plate 92 and Plate 93. These and all the other small divisions throughout the rest of the building probably represent a change to cubicle working that happened in the 1960s (Robson-Glyde 2009). Having said this, many are simple wood frames that are not closely dateable so these may date to Phase 9.

At some point, probably during this phase or possibly into Phase 9, the culvert of the River Stour was covered over and spaces Y4 and Y5 were created along with room G33, Plate 94 and Plate 95.

5.2.9 Phase 9 Post 1960

There were no significant or major changes to the structure of these buildings for most of this phase, the only significant change came in the early 2000s when the former weaving shed and other Phase 2 structures were truncated at the southern end of the site. These were replaced by a brickwork façade, Plate 96 and Plate 97.

6 Discussion

The structures that make up the Brintons Buildings may represent the entire span of the time that the company was based in Kidderminster, from the time the site was bought in the 1819, to when the company was sold and these offices closed in around 2010.

This building recording programme has documented nine phases of construction and development, the first two of which in the 19th century appear to represent an entirely industrial use of the site as well as the expansion of the company at this time. These correspond to many other such former buildings to the west between the Stour and the canal which made up the industrial facilities of Brintons the company.

It is not until the third phase that there is evidence for the site having been used as offices and show rooms specifically, with the construction of the Italianate offices in 1876, which remain on Exchange Street. These offices and show rooms were built of an ornate style, though retained some industrial use, as it had a sewing room on the second floor.

The two subsequent phases visually continued the 1876 style in terms of their façade, but were of much more utilitarian construction where not immediately visible. It is these three phases that make up the visible exterior. These latter two 1926 and 1928 phases were used as offices and show rooms, whilst retaining some more industrial spaces.

The period after the Second World War saw a boom in the carpet industry. This is represented by the sixth and seventh phases which saw the construction of a further show room, followed by further offices and industrial spaces. Within the eighth phase, many of the buildings were divided up into small office cubicles.

Little major construction appears to have taken place after the 1960s to 1970s. This may reflect to some degree the decline of the carpet industry in Kidderminster, and the increasing reliance of the company on overseas facilities. By the early 2000s, the company no longer relied on their town centre facilities, as represented by the truncation of the former weaving shed, leaving these buildings as only an administrative centre. By around 2011, the company was sold to investors and the offices were shut.

6.1 Research frameworks

The recording of this building is likely to be useful in the context of local research into the not only Brintons the company but also the wider carpet industry and its social context. Given Kidderminster and Brinton's national and international reputation, it may be of interest to researchers much more widely.

The archaeology of the West Midlands: a framework for research (Watt 2011), the publication of the West Midlands Regional Research Framework for Archaeology, is decidedly lacking in the discussion of upstanding archaeology and the recording of historic buildings. The section regarding post-medieval archaeology recognises that the archaeology of buildings is a 'well-established component' of the discipline of archaeology. However, it also regards that the recording of above ground archaeology is worthless without the excavation of the surrounding remains (Belford in Watt 2011, 226). This is a limited view of buildings archaeology and disregards the information that

can be gained from investigating and analysing an upstanding structure without any excavation. Mike Hodder discusses the need to record more historic buildings and to integrate above and below ground archaeology (Hodder in Watt 2011, 251). He states that the study of buildings 'not just the exceptional but also the typical, would be useful'.

7 Publication summary

Worcestershire Archaeology has a professional obligation to publish the results of archaeological projects within a reasonable period of time. To this end, Worcestershire Archaeology intends to use this summary as the basis for publication through local or regional journals. The client is requested to consider the content of this section as being acceptable for such publication.

Recording of a historic building was undertaken at Brintons Buildings, Exchange, Street, Kidderminster, Worcestershire (NGR SO 83145 76515, WSM67186).

The Brintons Buildings initially present themselves as an ornate company headquarters built within an Italianate style in 1876, as made clear by the headstone above the front door. This is complete with the Brintons family crest and motto. Further down Exchange Street another date stone shows that the style of the 1876 building was continued into a 1926 extension with remarkable care to visually match the style and materials. A further extension carried the style south along Exchange Street with the same care of detailing in 1928, though this was not commemorated.

These façades well represent the complexity of the building that has been hidden by later works. In total, the buildings were made up of nine separate phases, possibly dating from the earliest date of the company moving to the site in 1819. The majority of the early buildings are utilitarian and industrial in character. The 1876 phase is the earliest from which buildings specifically used as offices and show rooms exist. The 1926 and 1928 and 1950s phases extended the offices and show rooms, whilst incorporating or removing the earlier buildings. These latter phases retained only the façade and were otherwise very utilitarian in design apart from some interior cladding within the respective showrooms. By the 1960s, the buildings were increasingly split up into individual offices along with some industrial spaces.

8 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for their kind assistance in the successful conclusion of this project, the site owner Max Gouch for allowing access, Mr Dan Stiff of BB Architecture and Planning Ltd and Adrian Scruby, Historic Environment Planning Advisor.

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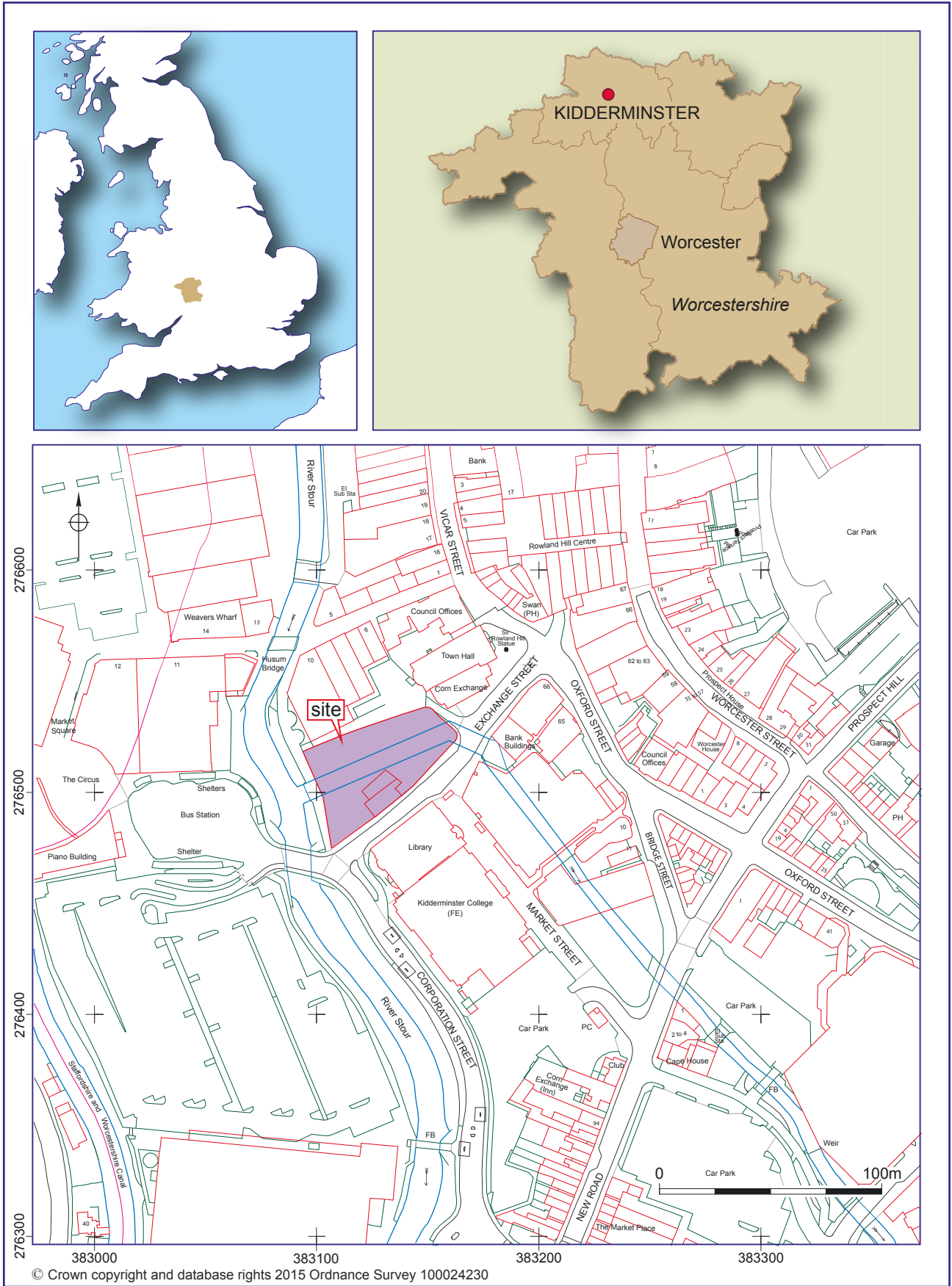
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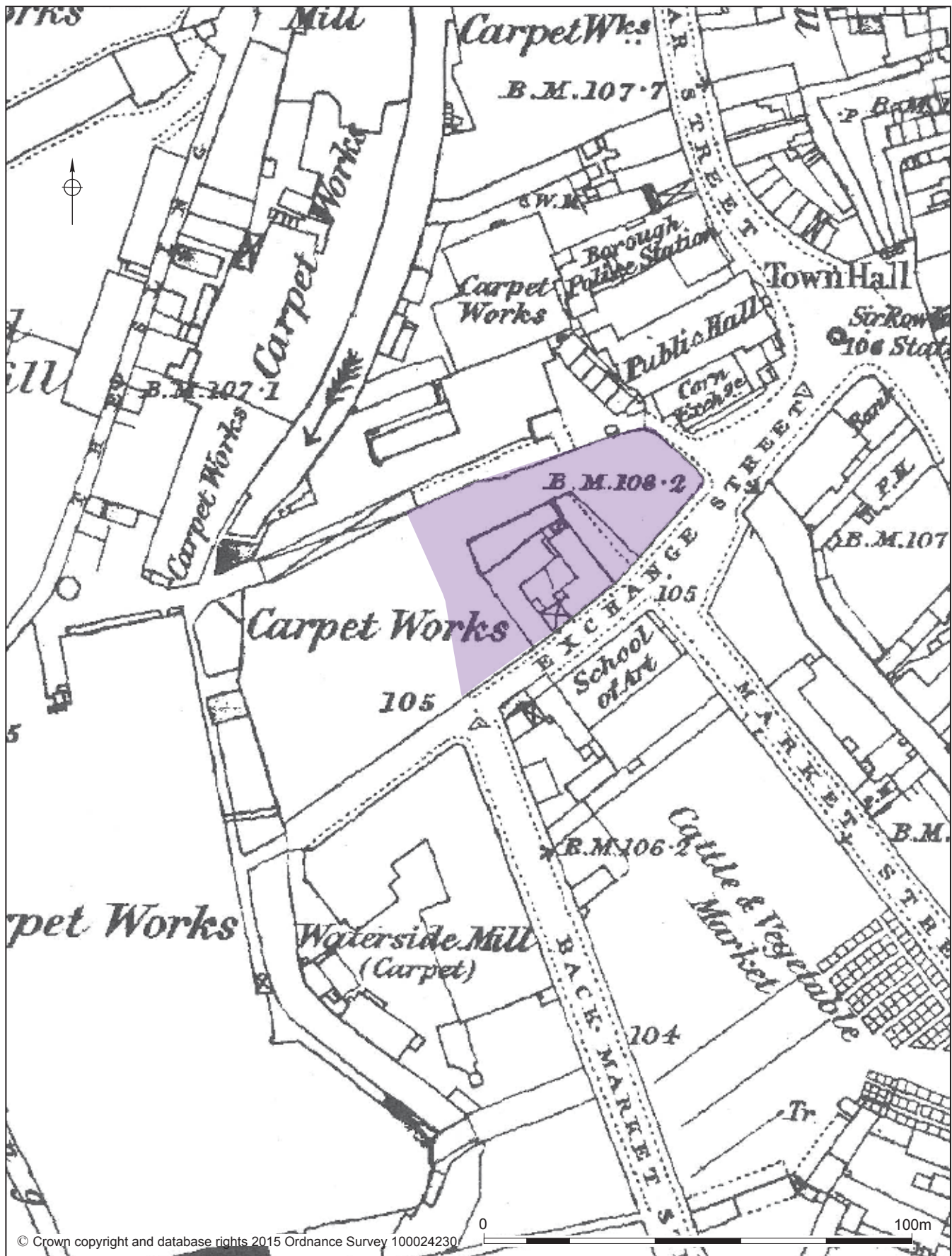
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Figures



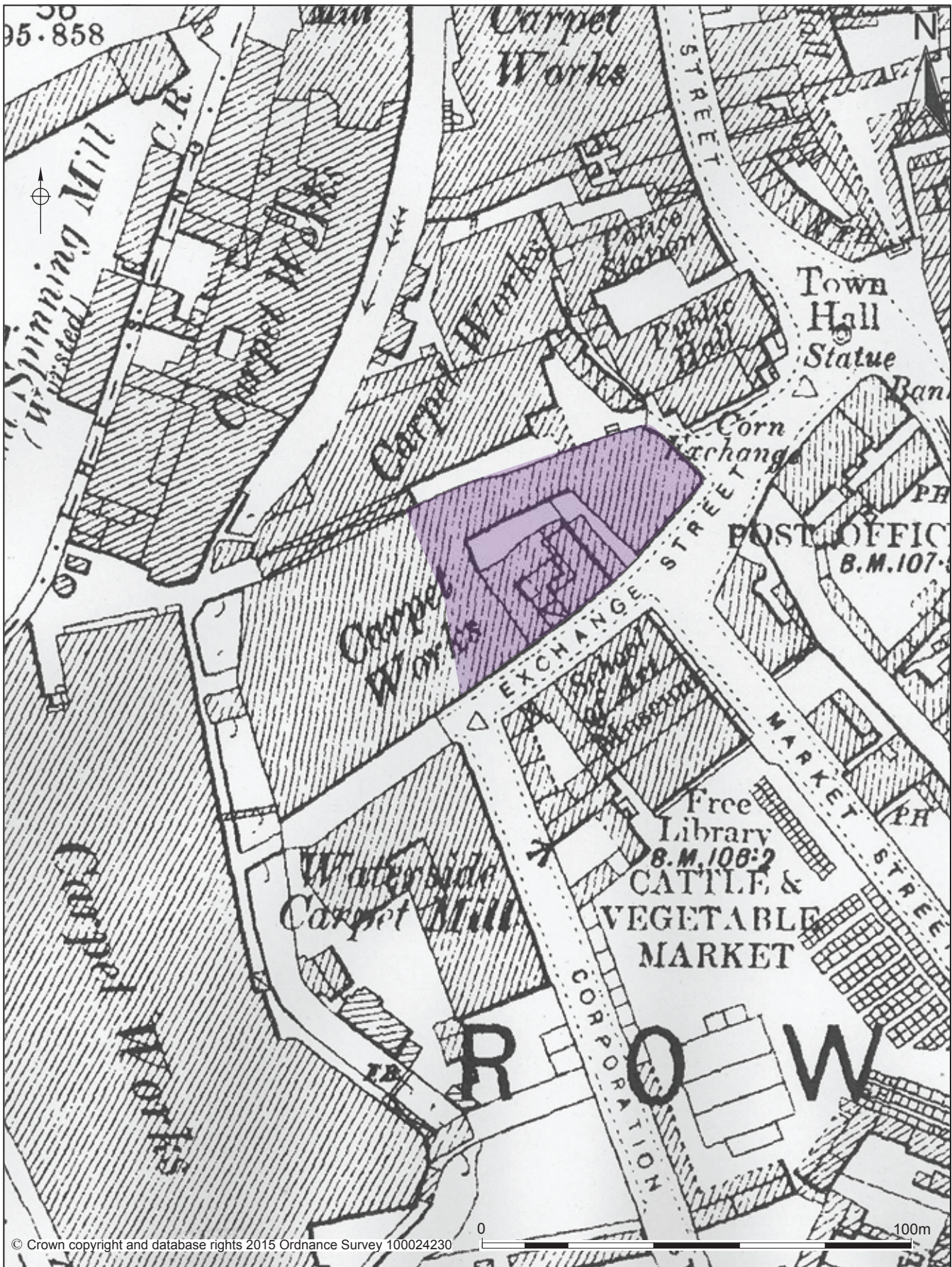
Location of the site

Figure 1



Extract from 1st edition OS, 1885

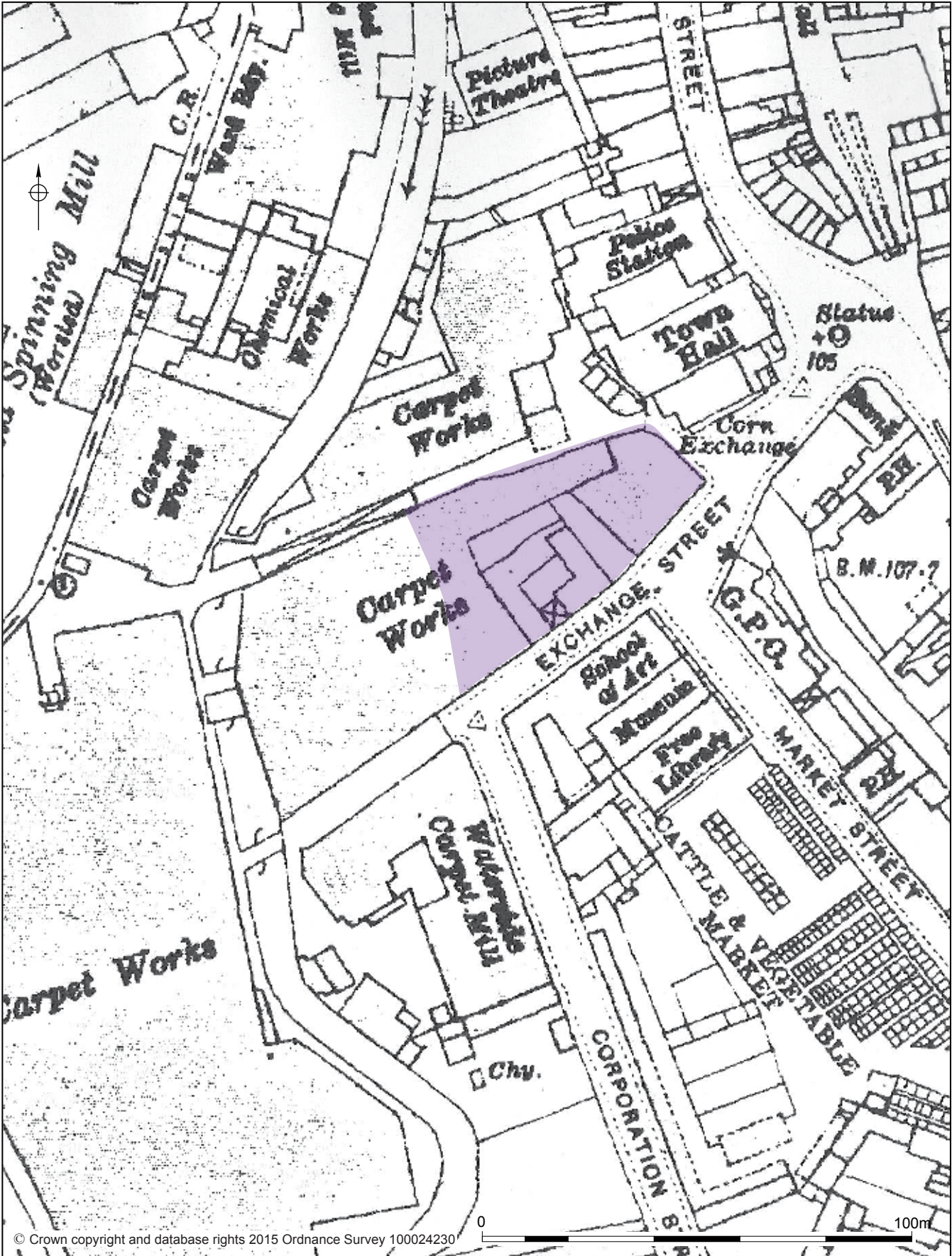
Figure 2



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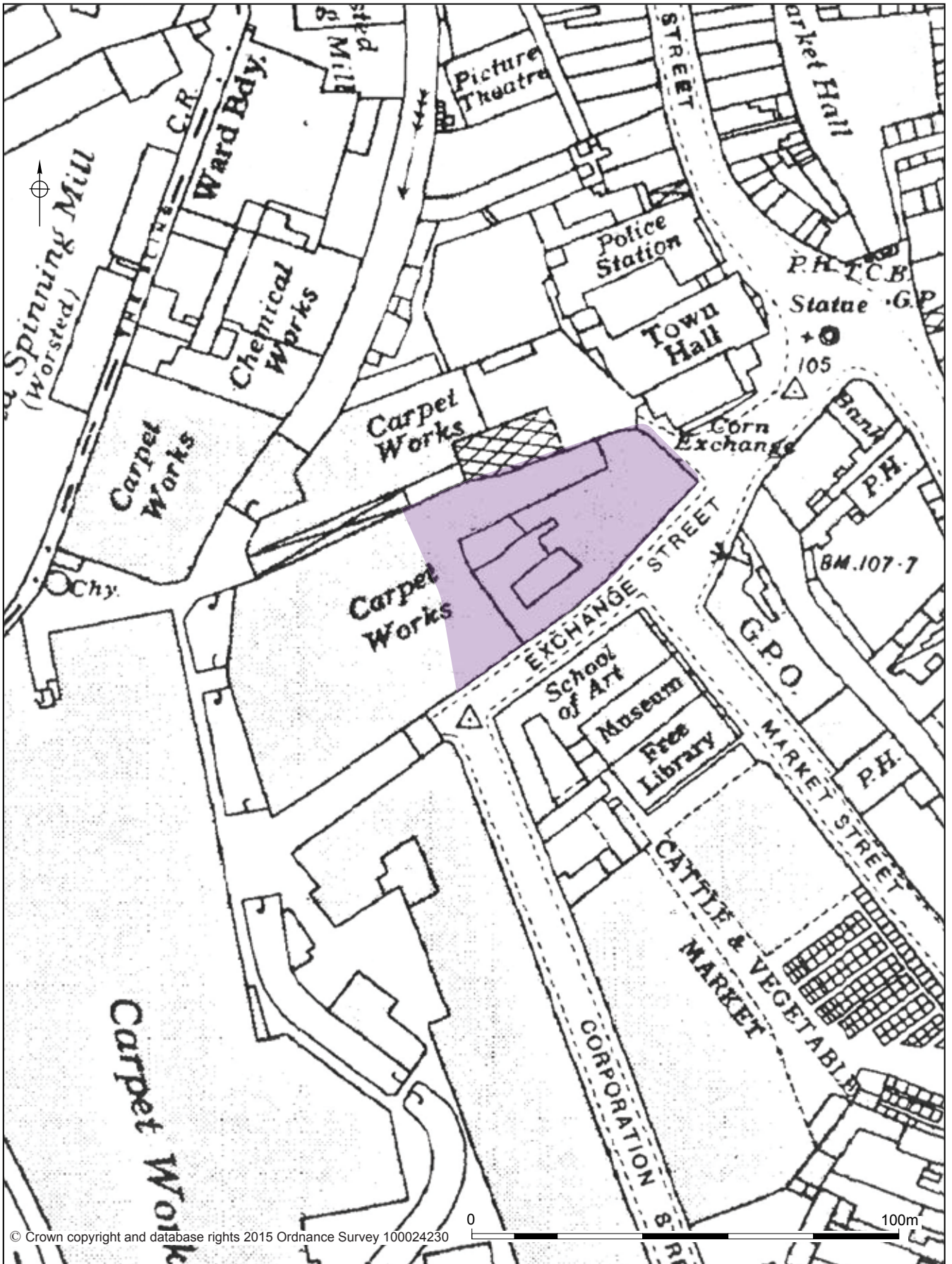
Extract from 1902 OS

Figure 3



Extract from 1924-27 OS

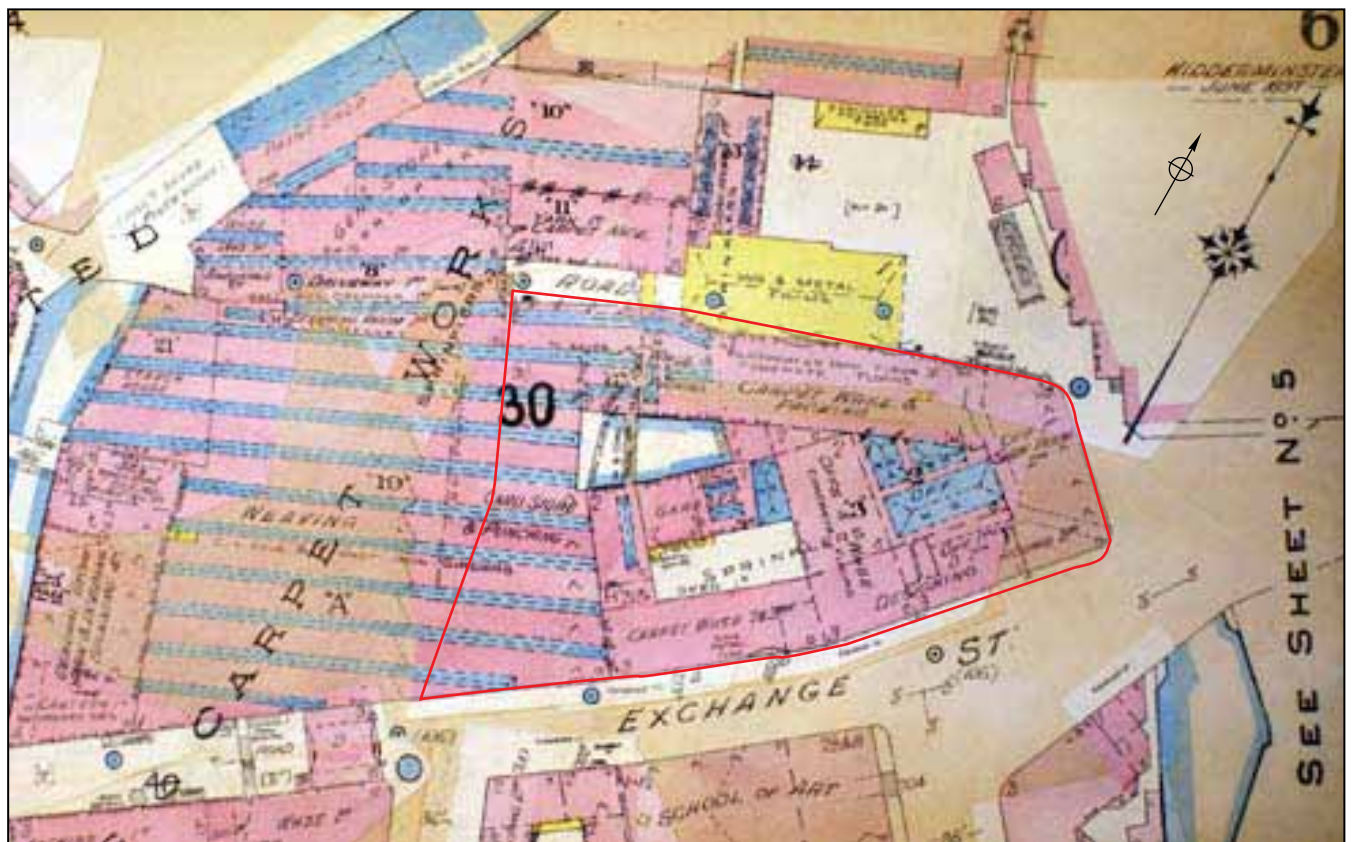
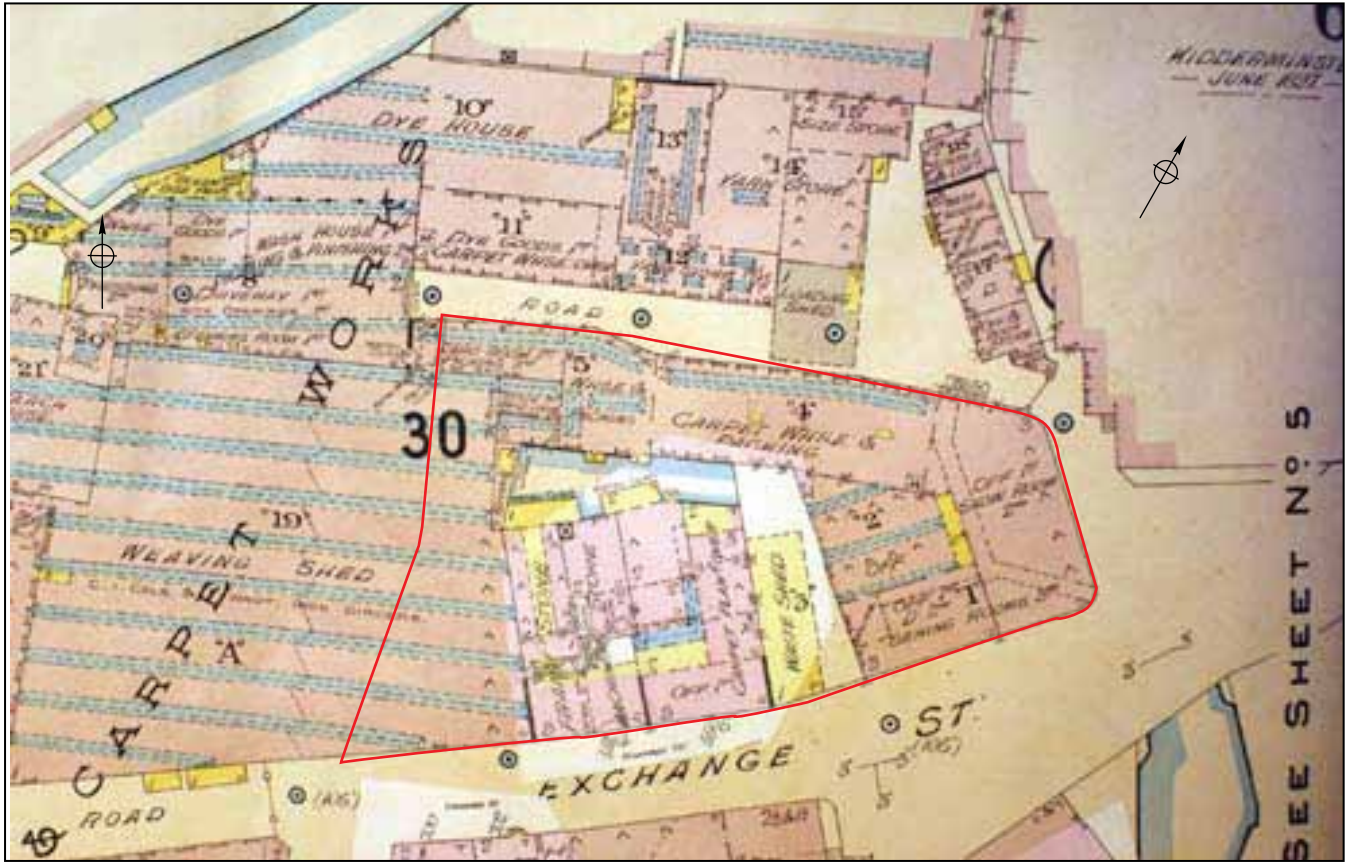
Figure 4



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Extract from 1938 OS

Figure 5



Extract from Goad 1904 (above) and Goad 1943 (below)

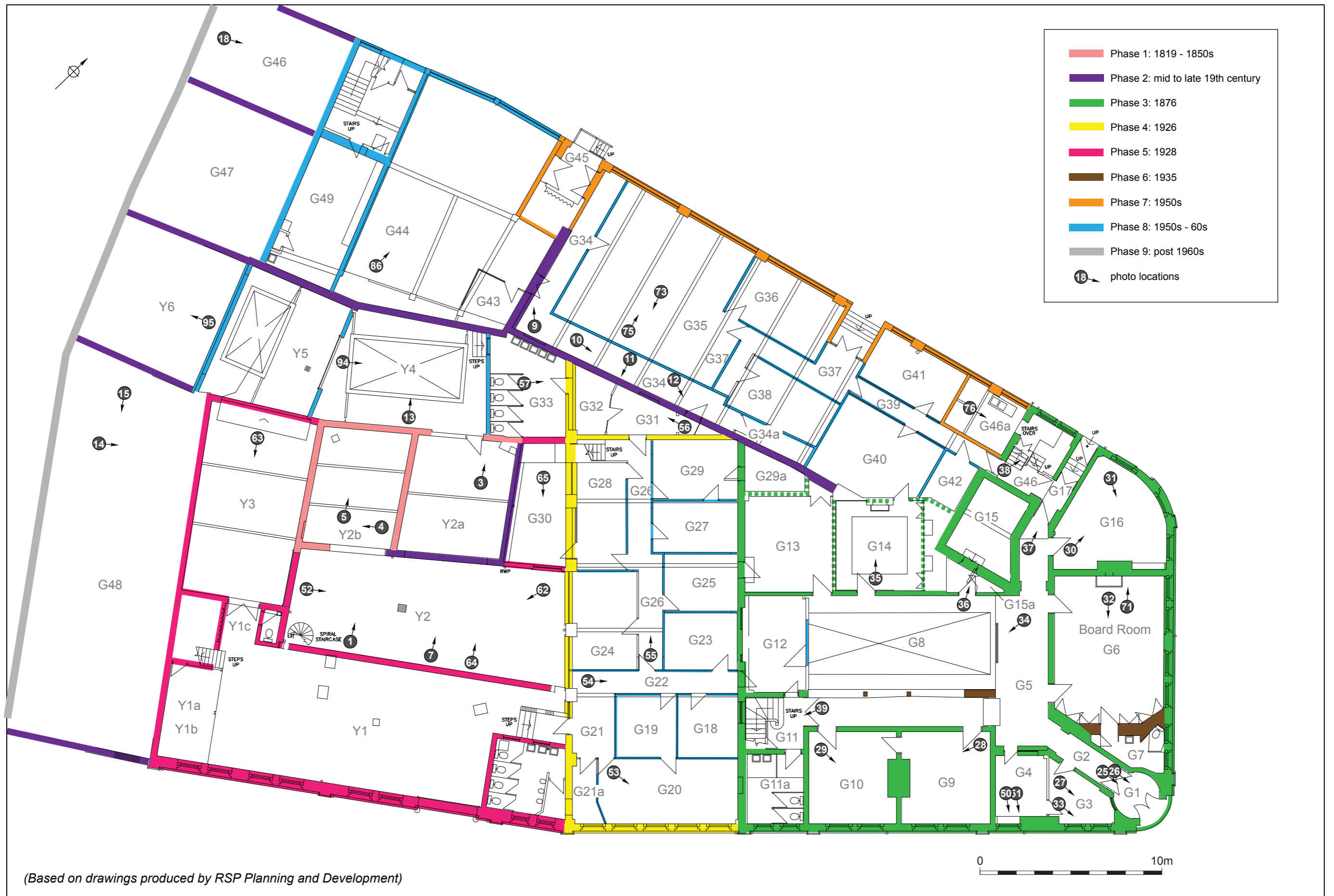
Figure 6



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Exchange Street and environs, showing the site in 1932

Figure 7



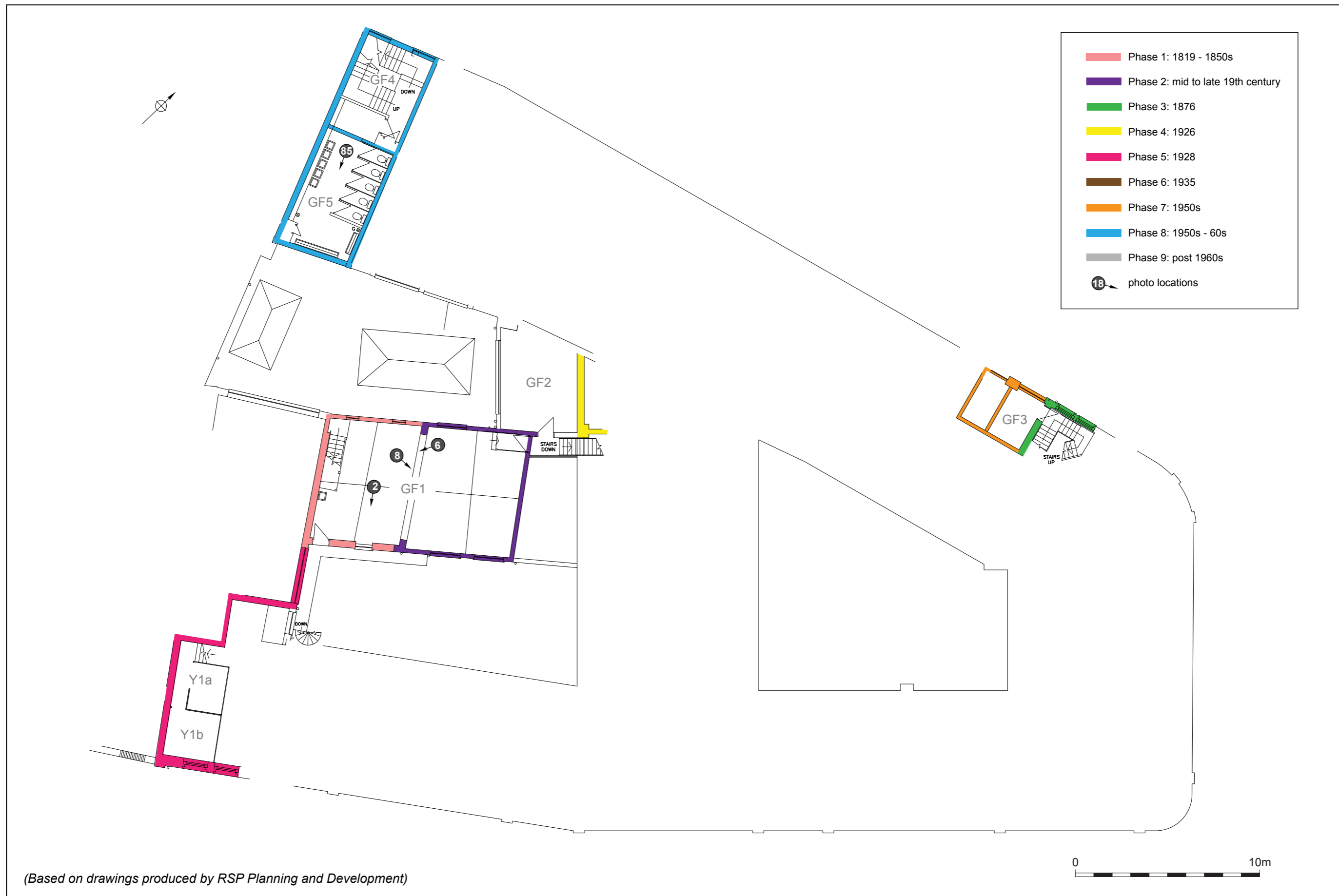
Ground floor plan of Brinton's Office (with room numbers) showing phases and photo locations

Figure 8



Ground floor plan of Brinton's Office showing external photo locations

Figure 8b



(Based on drawings produced by RSP Planning and Development)

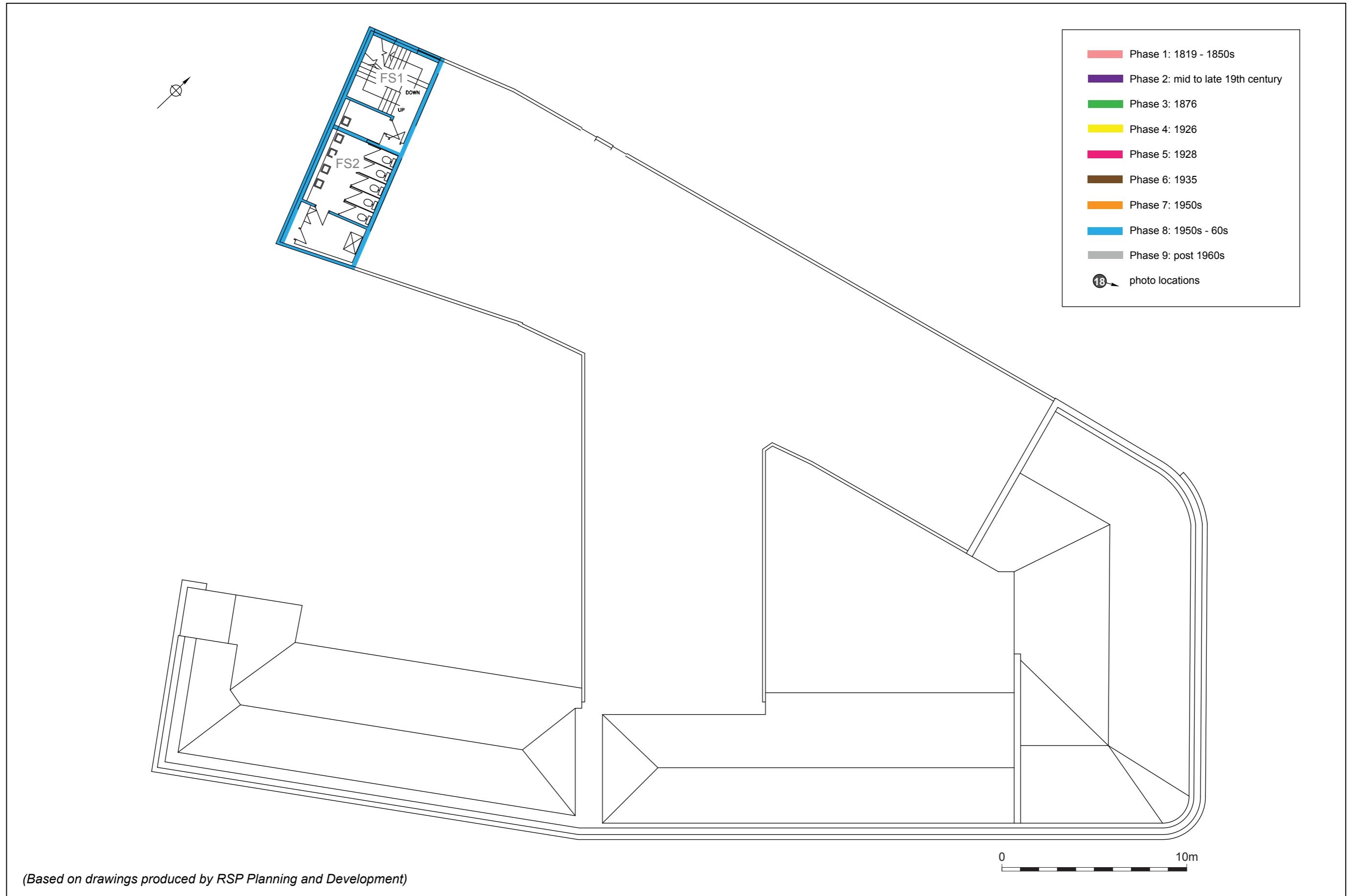
Ground/first mid-floor plan of Brinton's Office (with room numbers) showing phases and photo locations

Figure 9



First floor plan of Brinton's Office (with room numbers) showing phases and photo locations

Figure 10



(Based on drawings produced by RSP Planning and Development)

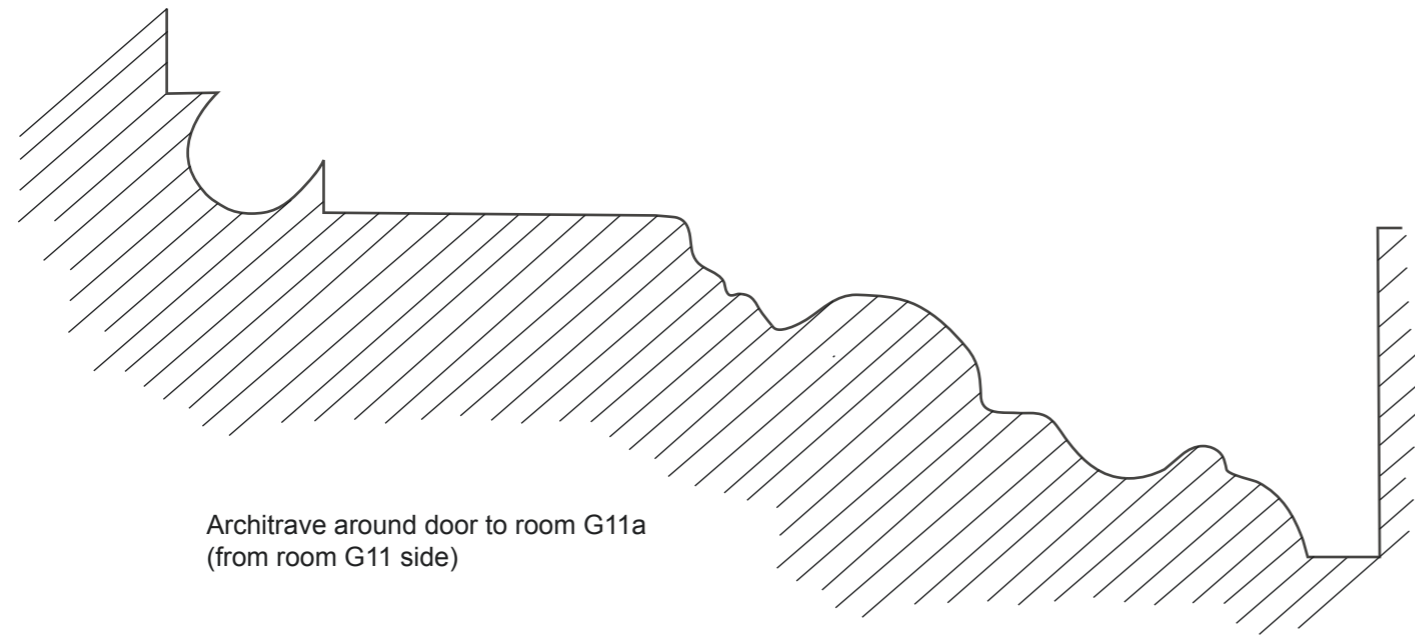
First/second mid-floor plan of Brinton's Office (with room numbers) showing phases and photo locations

Figure 11

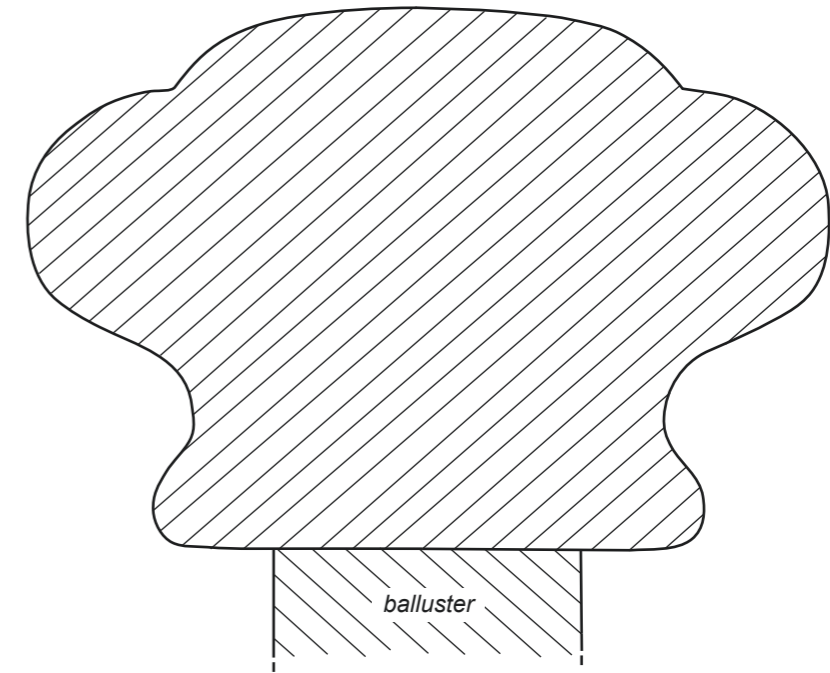


Second floor plan of Brinton's Office (with room numbers) showing phases and photo locations

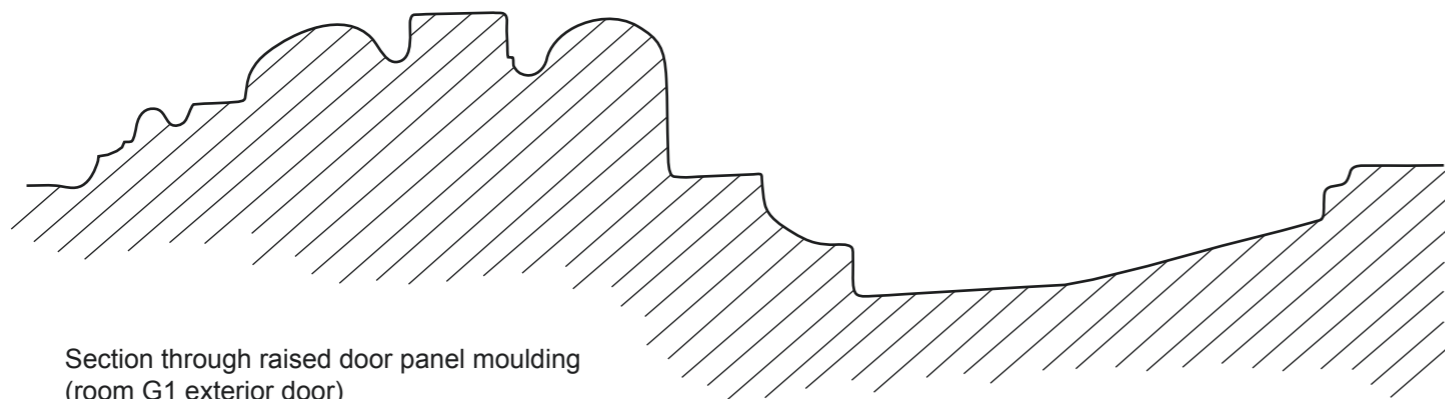
Figure 12



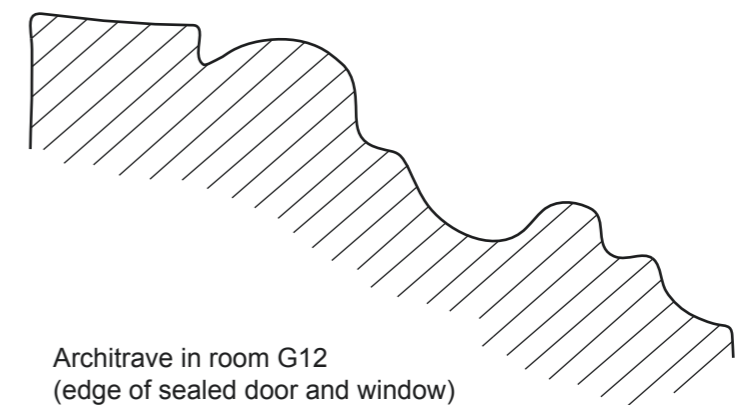
Architrave around door to room G11a
(from room G11 side)



Section through stair handrail



Section through raised door panel moulding
(room G1 exterior door)



Architrave in room G12
(edge of sealed door and window)

Plates

(Location of plates are given by room number where appropriate)



Plate 1 Two bay Phase 1 structure (Y2)



Plate 2 Fanlight windows, Phase 1 (GF1)



Plate 3 Arch window, Phase 1 (Y2A)



Plate 4 Arch window of, Phase 1 (Y2B)



Plate 5 Inserted window and door into Phase 1 structure (Y2B)



Plate 6 Kingpost truss, Phase 1 (GF1)



Plate 7 Two bay structure, Phase 2 (Y2)



Plate 8 Kingpost truss within two bay structure, Phase 2 (GF1)



Plate 9 Former gable with possible chimney breast, Phase 2 (G34)



Plate 10 Former eastern wall of structure, Phase 2 (G34)



Plate 11 Shallow arch headed window within former eastern wall of structure, Phase 2 (G34)



Plate 12 Shallow arch headed doorway within former eastern wall of structure, Phase 2 (G34)

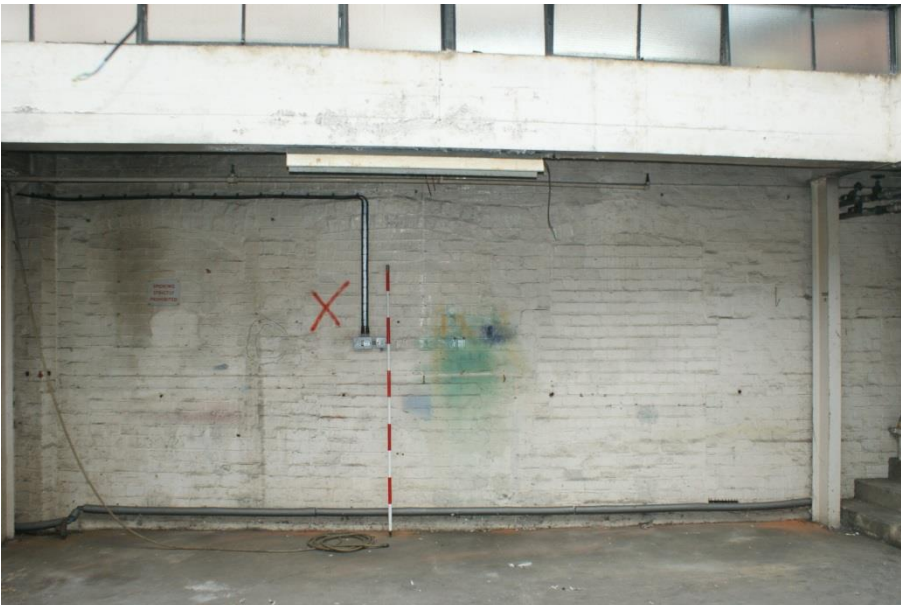


Plate 13 Shallow arch headed windows within former eastern wall of structure, Phase 2 (Y4)



Plate 14 Former weaving shed, Phase 2 (G48)



Plate 15 Former weaving shed, Phase 2 (G48)



Plate 16 Four bay, two storey structure, Phase 2



Plate 17 Kingpost trusses within four bay, two storey structure, Phase 2 (F38)



Plate 18 Ground floor within four bay, two storey structure, Phase 2 (G46)



Plate 19 Possible machinery fittings within (F38a)



Plate 20 Phase 3 structure



Plate 21 Phase 3 structure



Plate 22 Phase 3 structure



Plate 23 Monogram and date above the door, Phase 3



Plate 24 Entranceway, Phase 3



Plate 25 Phase 3 (G1)



Plate 26 Phase 3 (G1)



Plate 27 Phase 3 (G3)



Plate 28 Phase 3 (G9)



Plate 29 Phase 3 (G10)



Plate 30 Phase 3 (G16)



Plate 31 Phase 3 (G16)



Plate 32 Phase 3 (G6)



Plate 33 Phase 3 (G3)



Plate 34 Phase 3 (G8)



Plate 35 Phase 3 (G14)



Plate 36 Phase 3 (G15a)



Plate 37 Phase 3 (G17)



Plate 38 Phase 3 (G46)



Plate 39 Phase 3 (G11)



Plate 40 Phase 3 (F8)



Plate 41 Phase 3 (F6)



Plate 42 Phase 3 (F1)



Plate 43 Phase 3 (S28)



Plate 44 Phase 3 (S28), above modern suspended roof



Plate 45 Phase 3 (S28), above modern suspended roof



Plate 46 Phase 3 (S29)



Plate 47 Phase 3 (S29)



Plate 48 Phase 4 structure



Plate 49 Date stone above Phase 4 structure



Plate 50 Phase 4 window fittings (G3) (Robson-Glyde 2009)



Plate 51 Phase 4 window fittings (G3) (Robson-Glyde 2009)



Plate 52 Phase 4 structure (Y2)



Plate 53 Phase 4 (G20)



Plate 54 Phase 4 (G22)



Plate 55 Phase 4 (G26)



Plate 56 Phase 4 (G31)



Plate 57 Phase 4 (G32)



Plate 58 Phase 4 (F11)



Plate 59 Phase 4 (F15)



Plate 60 Phase 5



Plate 61 Phase 5



Plate 62 Phase 5 (Y2)

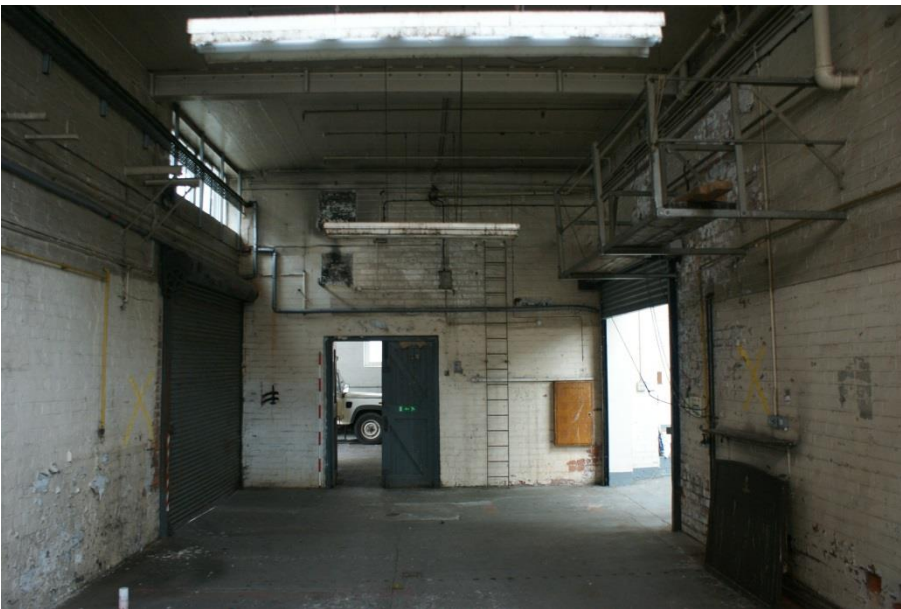


Plate 63 Phase 5 (Y3)



Plate 64 Phase 5 (Y2)



Plate 65 Phase 5 (G30)



Plate 66 Phase 5 (F35)



Plate 67 Phase 5 (F37)



Plate 68 Phase 5 (F36)



Plate 69 Phase 5 (F36)



Plate 70 Phase 5 (S30)



Plate 71 Phase 6 (G6) (Robson-Glyde 2009)



Plate 72 Phase 7



Plate 73 Phase 7 (G35)



Plate 74 Phase 7 (F31)



Plate 75 Phase 7 (G35)



Plate 76 Phase 7 (G46a)



Plate 77 Phase 7 (F22)



Plate 78 Phase 7 (F22)



Plate 79 Phase 7 (F4)



Plate 80 Phase 7 (F21)



Plate 81 Phase 7 (F24)



Plate 82 Phase 8



Plate 83 Phase 8 (S30)



Plate 84 Phase 8 (F33)



Plate 85 Phase 8 (GF5)



Plate 86 Phase 8 (G44)



Plate 87 Phase 8 (F32)



Plate 88 Phase 8 (F30)



Plate 89 Phase 8 (F34)



Plate 90 Phase 8 (S7)



Plate 91 Phase 8 (S9 to S13)



Plate 92 Phase 8 (S15)



Plate 93 Phase 8 (S20)



Plate 94 Phase 8 (Y4)



Plate 95 Phase 8 (Y6)



Plate 96 Phase 9



Plate 97 Phase 9

Appendix 1 Technical information

The archive (site code: WSM67186)

The archive consists of:

- 1 Field progress reports AS2
 - 8 Photographic records AS3
 - 624 Digital photographs
 - 8 Building Record Form AS43
 - 6 Building Phase Record AS45
-
- 1 CD-Rom/DVDs
 - 1 Copy of this report (bound hard copy)

The project archive is intended to be placed at:

Worcestershire County Museum
Museums Worcestershire
Hartlebury Castle
Hartlebury
Near Kidderminster
Worcestershire DY11 7XZ
Tel Hartlebury (01299) 250416
