A Historic Building Significance Assessment of the Laban Tansey Building, Ashcroft House, 127 Upper Bond Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire. SP 428 945

Andrew Hyam

For: HSS Architects

Checked by

Signed: ....**Date**: .21.4.2008.

Name: .N. Cooper.....

Approved by

Signed: . .**Date**: .21.4.2008

Name: ....R.J. Buckley.....

University of Leicester
Archaeological Services
University Rd., Leicester, LE1 7RH
Tel: (0116) 2522848 Fax: (0116) 2522614
www.le.ac.uk/ulas

ULAS Report Number 2008-062
©2008
Accession Number X.A.63.2008

CONTENTS

Summary 1
1. Introduction 1
2. Background 2
3. Historic Building Significance Assessment Objectives 3
4. Methodology 4
5. The Building 4
6. Discussion 7
7. Archive 7
8. Publication 8
9. Acknowledgements 8
10. Bibliography 8
Appendix 1. Figures 9

FIGURES

Figure 1. Hinckley and location of site. 9
Figure 2. Site location. 10
Figure 3. Schematic outline of the Laban Tansey Building 11
Figure 4. 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:10560 11
Figure 5. 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:25000 12
Figure 6. Laban Tansey building and adjacent buildings. 12
Figure 7. Laban Tansey building with hosiery mill to the south. 13
Figure 8. Laban Tansey building. Frontage. 13
Figure 9. Laban Tansey Building. Joint between phases on frontage. 14
Figure 10. North wall of main building. 15
Figure 11. Rear wall of main building with later outhouse addition. 15
Figure 12. Inside of goods entrance. 16
Figure 13. Main building, ground floor. 16
Figure 14. Main building, ground floor. 17
Figure 15. Main building. Window latch detail. 17
Figure 16. Main building, first floor. 18
Figure 17. Main building, first floor. 18
Figure 18. Main building roof structure 19
Figure 19. Gable-ended building, ground floor. Original back wall and windows. 19
Figure 20. Rear workshop. Viewed from goods entrance. 20
Figure 21. Gable-ended building, first floor. Front windows. 20
Figure 22. Gable-ended building, first floor. Blocked remnant of rear Venetian windows in gable. 21

A Historic Building Significance Assessment of the Laban Tansey Building, Ashcroft House, 127 Upper Bond Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire.

Summary

A Historic Building Significance Assessment was undertaken for HSS Architects by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) on the 15th April 2008 as a result of a proposal to demolish the building in order to build apartments and office space (planning application No: 08/00037/FUL). The building, with a footprint of approximately 160m^2, lies within the Druid Quarter Conservation Area which encompasses a variety of light industrial and domestic buildings dating from the 19th century to the present day. The Laban Tansey Building appears to have begun life in the mid to late 19th century as a small two-storied needleworks which was subsequently extended by the addition of a late 19th century gable-ended building which was also subsequently extended to the rear, probably before the start of the First World War. Despite many of the external features of the building surviving, no internal fixtures or details remain to indicate the former use of any part of the building.

Records will be deposited with Leicestershire County Council under accession number X.A.63.2008.

1. Introduction

Hinckley lies approximately 16km south-west of Leicester, with the site being assessed located within the heart of the town (fig.1). The Laban Tansey Building is situated on the western side of Druid Street near to the corner of New Street (fig. 2). It consists of two main ranges, the first being a two-storey four-bay structure fronting onto Druid Street and the second a gable-ended building extending west towards Upper Bond Street (fig. 3). The two parts of the building are joined by a small bay over a goods/wagon entrance. The site is within the Druid Quarter Conservation Area which is currently seeing large parts of the locality being redeveloped in order to build domestic flats, houses and light industrial properties.

Under planning application numbers: 08/00068/CON and 08/00037/FUL the existing building is to be demolished. However, the Leicestershire County Council Historic and Natural Environment Team (HNET), as advisors to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, have requested that a Historic Building Significance Assessment is undertaken first in order to clarify the historical or architectural importance of the structure. In this advisory role, the HNET noted that: although the building proposed for demolition is not singled out as a landmark building, it does follow the 'red brick and slate roof palette that dominates the Druid Quarter' and is in keeping with the mixed residential and industrial character of the area. As such, it was considered that the building makes a positive contribution to the character of the Druid Quarter Conservation Area. Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area in question; and, as with listed building controls, this should be the prime

consideration in determining a consent application. In the case of conservation area controls, however, account should clearly be taken of the part played in the architectural or historic interest of the area by the building for which demolition is proposed, and in particular of the wider effects of demolition on the building's surroundings and on the conservation area as a whole.' (PPG15 paragraph 4.26). 'The general presumption should be in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.' (PPG 15 paragraph 4.27).

2. Background

Laban Tansey is recorded as being a manufacturer of 'self-acting and all other kinds of needles' with an address in Druid Street in the 1891 and 1900 Kelly's Business Directory. The Druid Quarter Masterplan produced by Latham Architects notes that there is a building plan showing Laban Tansey occupying the present site in 1899 in much the same form that the building is in today. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map (1:10560 scale) produced between 1849 and 1899, which was consulted vie the Edina Digimap Collection, appears to show at least the front range of buildings facing onto Druid Street (fig. 4). The quality of this map makes it unclear if the gable-ended structure to the south is present or not, however the Digimap 1st edition 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map produced between 1854 and 1901 clearly shows the full range of buildings as they are today (fig. 5). The Masterplan also notes that the buildings were designed by Joseph Ball of Hinckley who may be the same Joseph Ball who built a number of commercial properties in Birmingham in the 1880s. It is not known,however, which parts of the building Joseph Ball designed.

Hosiery and stocking production have played a key role in Hinckley's industrial history since at least the 16th century. William Iliffe brought the first stocking-frame to Hinckley in an act which transformed the output of the town's cottage industry. Another significant event was the arrival of R. Lees in 1817 who was a key figure in the expansion of the framework knitting business. A major component of the hosiery manufacturing process is the needle with a large number being required on the ever-growing machines. Despite this it seems that needle production took place in fairly modestly sized buildings which would be ideally suited to the building which is the subject of this report. Another needlemaker is reported to be in operation in nearby Castle Street around the turn of the century although this building is no longer standing.

The Laban Tansey Building is located within the northern part of the Druid Quarter Conservation Area which Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council describe as an area with special architectural or historic character, which is desirable to preserve and enhance. The whole of Druid Street has been associated with the hosiery and knitting industry since at least the second half of the 19th century with a number of factories and industrial buildings being constructed from the 1880s to just before the First World War. Many buildings have since changed ownership and use, with few having any association with their original purpose. Piecemeal demolition and redevelopment has also taken place along Druid Street. A number of late Victorian houses line both sides of the street to the north of the Laban Tansey Building but modern houses have been built directly opposite. A modern garage unit has also been built adjacent to its northern wall (fig. 6). Butting up against the south side of the building is a large three-

storied hosiery mill with a date of 1911 carved around the entranceway (fig. 7). The main part of the mill is presently empty and scheduled for conversion and redevelopment into flats but will keep much of the façade intact. An annex to the large mill, containing a glazing business, and some domestic housing fronting onto Upper Bond Street are located to the rear of the Laban Tansey Building. Much of Druid Street to the south of this site has also been demolished and redeveloped in the recent past following the demise of the hosiery industry in the 1980s and '90s. The Laban Tansey Building is currently empty but as part of the redevelopment plan for this site it has been proposed that the building be demolished to make way for a small number of offices and apartments.

3. Historic Building Significance Assessment Objectives

The objectives of the work were taken from the English Heritage Understanding Historic Buildings, and are summarised as:

The written account

1. The building's precise location, as a National Grid reference and in address form.

2. A note of any statutory designation (listing, scheduling or conservation area). Non-statutory designations (historic parks and gardens registers, local lists etc) may be added.

3. The date of the record, the name(s) of the recorders and, if an archive has been created, its location.

4. A summary (if no further details are called for) of the building's type or purpose, historically and at present, its materials and possible date(s), in so far as these are apparent from a superficial inspection.

5. A table of contents and a list of illustrations or figures.

6. An expansion of 4, if appropriate, summarising the building's form, function, date and sequence of development. The names of architects, builders, patrons and owners should be given if known. The purpose of such an expansion is to describe the building when no fuller record is necessary, to serve as an introduction to the more detailed body of the record that may follow, and to satisfy those users who may need no more than a summary of the report's findings.

15. A discussion of the building's past and present relationship to its setting: for example its relationship to local settlement patterns, to a field system, to a park, garden, moat, graveyard or other artificial landscape; its part in any larger architectural or functional group of buildings; its visual importance as a landmark.

16. An assessment of the potential for further investigative or documentary work, and of the potential survival of below-ground evidence for the history of the building and its site.

17. A discussion of the architectural or historical context or significance of the building locally, regionally or nationally, in terms of its origin, purpose, form, construction, design, materials, status or historical associations.

The drawings

8. A plan or plans identifying the location and direction of accompanying photographs.

9. Copies of earlier drawings throwing light on the building's history.

The photography

Sufficient photographic record to illustrate points being made in the report.

4. Methodology

Digital colour photographs and 35mm black and white photographs were taken throughout. Sketch plans recording the direction and location of each photograph were also made. Partial plans of each floor level were also drawn at a scale of 1:50.

An archive and document search was made at the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.

5. The Building

The outside

The whole frontage is built on the same alignment running parallel to the street and is set slightly back from the pavement behind a set of plain iron railings (fig. 8). On the northern hand is a two-storey four-bay building built of red brick with a Welsh slate roof. A small brick chimney, which appears to have been capped, rises from the centre of the roof at the southern end of the four bays. The ridge tiles to the north of the chimney have a small rolled-top decoration which is not seen on the plain ridge tiles on the other side of the chimney. An apparent colour change in the slates can also be seen at this point along with a slight undulation in the roof height indicating a different building phase. This line can be followed down to a joint in the brickwork running vertically between the main building and the goods entrance (fig. 9). The bricks for the main building, laid in a Flemish Garden Wall bond, measure 220mm long x 80mm high x 0.115mm wide and those above the goods entrance and the gable-ended building, laid in an English Bond, measure 230mm long x 80mm high x 115mm wide, again indicating two phases.

The four-bayed building has cast iron guttering and downpipes which are likely to be original. The tops of the windows have shallow arches using two rows of red brick headers and an upper course of blues whilst the sills are of shaped blue brick. The upper floor windows have cast iron frames, three panes high by five wide. The ground floor windows are identical in design but are four panes high which have been partially boarded over but otherwise appear to be original and unmodified.

The northern end of the main building which forms part of the adjacent garage forecourt is a plain gable end with a single ground floor doorway with the same three courses of red and blue brick header detail seen above the windows to the front. There is no evidence of any blocked or inserted openings (fig. 10). Two windows survive intact on the north-west corner and are identical to those on the street frontage apart from the upper window missing the blue brick upper course (fig. 11).

The gable-ended building and the adjacent goods entrance with window above all appear to be a second phase in the development of the building. A Venetian style three-windowed upper floor forms the main focus of the gable end with matching two windows and an offset door at ground level. The blue-brick detail seen on the main building has been omitted here and the sills are made of concrete. The original cast iron windows survive throughout although the southern ground floor window is heavily boarded and may have been blocked with masonry. The arched window above the goods entrance matches the style of the gable-ended building. A narrow chimney built against the adjacent hosiery mill extends from the roof of the gable-ended building but it is not clear what purpose this served.

Access to the rear of the buildings is restricted by later development but two large upper floor windows with a gable stack in between belonging to the gable-ended building can be seen from Upper Bond Street. The rear of the main four-bay building is now within a much later workshop, as described below.

In plan the buildings are far from square which may indicate that they had to fit around an earlier set of buildings or property boundaries when originally built. The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map shows the property boundary between the old and new phases of the building and a boundary to the north which would be half way across the garage next door.

Inside the main building

Access to the building is via a sliding door in the south-west corner from the goods entrance although it is not clear whether this is a later inserted doorway or not (fig, 12). A second single-width doorway has been inserted through the rear wall from the stairwell where a window used to be. Inside, the room is currently empty with a concrete floor and boarded ceiling which do not give any indication of past uses or locations of machinery (figs. 13 and 14). A small blocked fireplace is located on the southern wall. This had a 0.92m wide (3 feet) opening but only extends into the room by 0.36m which seems small for any industrial process. On the eastern wall can be seen the four windows fronting onto Druid Street. The central six panes are tilted about their axis and can be secured by a crudely shaped iron bar (fig. 15). Two identical windows survive at each end of the eastern wall but the central windows have been blocked and replaced by a single door as seen in figure 13. No evidence of an internal staircase can be seen.

The first floor of the main building is via a staircase built as part of a range of small outbuildings attached to the rear. This addition is made from the same sized bricks as the gable-ended building with which it is probably contemporary. The stairs are also lit by what appear to be the re-used original windows taken from the main building after they were blocked. The first floor, like the ground floor is a single open room (figs. 16 and 17) The small size (0.6m wide) of the blocked fireplace again suggests

that it was used to warm the room rather than act as an industrial hearth. The exposed roof timbers do not have any evidence of machinery or pulleys being attached to them (fig. 18). The wooden floorboards, each measuring 0.14m wide, use machine cut nails apart from a 1.32m wide strip across the northern end of the room where boards and nails with a more modern appearance have been used. It is possible that this was the location of the original internal staircase if one existed. No marks on the floor or walls give any indication of machinery or industrial use.

The upstairs windows all have the same opening mechanism as on the ground floor. Only one window survives on the rear wall, the rest have been blocked or knocked through to make the double entrance from the stairs (fig. 17).

The gable-ended building

The ground floor of the gable-ended building is entered by the narrow double doors from Druid Street. The two cast-iron framed windows to the south being the same width as the doorway. A number of wooden-partitioned offices cover much of the ground floor as far as a brick wall which appears to have formed the original back wall of the building (fig. 19). The wall is pierced by two cast-iron framed windows and an unframed doorway. There is no indication that the doorway was once a window. On the other side of this wall the windows have sloping sills built to deflect the rain showing that this was once an outside wall. A matching window in the northern wall also indicates that this was originally outside. A later phase of building work has extended the gable-ended building to the west which had the result of doubling its length. This brick built extension contains no windows but has three openings on the northern side into a roof-lighted single storey workshop built behind the main building (fig. 20).

Access to the first floor of the gable-ended building is via the gable-roofed staircase behind the main building. At the top of the stairs, above the goods entrance, is an office with a large wooden framed window looking into the gable-ended room, with a single doorway to the side. The seven by three paned cast iron window described earlier looks out onto Druid Street. The office, stairs and outbuildings appear to be of the same date.

The open upper floor is entered through a double width opening at the side of the small office. Apart from overhead lighting and heating pipes, a modern bench and some shelves there is no remaining evidence concerning the use or purpose of the room (figs. 21 and 22). The three Venetian style windows form the southern end of the room and the tops of a similar set of windows can be seen in a bricked up gable half way down the room which is supported by an I-section steel girder (fig. 22). This blocked gable corresponds with the wall and windows seen on the ground floor and shows that the building was only half its present length when originally constructed. Along the northern wall, a three-pane high by four wide cast-iron window forms the only side window from the original room, but with the extension, three more windows were added which are a combination of five by four and four by four paned windows all with the same style of cast-iron frames (fig. 21). The open roof structure is of similar king-post design for both parts of the room but the later extension has the addition of iron strapwork at the key joints.

6. Discussion

From the assessment it can be seen that there are three main phases to the development of the building. The first is the construction of the main four bay building which had windows to both the front and rear and probably a single entrance on the northern side. It seems likely that there may also have been an internal staircase at this end too. The small fireplaces may have been for warmth or at least not for producing heat high enough to work or shape raw materials. A second phase was the construction of the adjacent gable-ended building and the rear staircase and outbuildings. The staircase effectively blocked out the light from the rear of the main building so two of the windows on the ground floor and three on the first floor were blocked and the window frames re-used in the new build. The main reason for the new stairs however was for access to the office and the first floor of the gable-ended building. When new, this building had matching Venetian style windows to the front and rear until a third phase of building work increased its length. Although no clear dates can be found for any of these phases, it seems likely that they took place within the later second half of the 19th century up to the early years of the 20th century. Judging by the dates of the remaining hosiery and knitwear buildings around the site, this period was one of expansion and increasing production.

It is unfortunate however that no traces can be seen of the manufacturing processes that were carried out within the building. Despite being owned at the turn of the century by a needle manufacturer, it is not possible to state with any confidence that needles were actually made on this site, indeed the final length of the gable-ended building is more reminiscent of a conventional hosiery mill. More research would be needed to discover the processes required to make Mr Tansley's self-acting needles and whether or not this would suit the buildings in question. A number of West-Country needleworks remain as living museums and could be used in comparison, but these are for conventional needles for hand sewing rather than industrial needles. Furthermore, even if needles were manufactured here, it is not clear if there building and extensions were purpose built or adapted from an earlier use.

The Laban Tansley Building represents an interesting part of the light industrial development associated with Hinckley's industrial past. It lies within a rapidly changing area where many similar buildings have also become redundant due to the changing fortunes of the hosiery manufacturing business both in the town of Hinckley and in this country.

7. Archive

The archive consists of:
This report,
Notes and sketches of the survey (10 pages of A5 notepaper),
3 contact sheets of digital photographs,
1 index sheet of the digital photographs,
35mm black and white contact sheet,
35mm black and white negatives,
1 index sheet of black and white photographs,
1 cd of this report and the digital photographs.

8. Publication

A summary of the work will be submitted for publication in the *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in due course. A record of the project will also be submitted to the OASIS project. Oasis is an online index to archaeological grey literature reports.

9. Acknowledgements

The assessment was carried out by A R Hyam. The project was managed by R Buckley.

10. Bibliography

English Heritage. 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings. A Guide to Good Recording Practice.*

Hinckley and Bosworth District Council website http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=5624
and
http://www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=17508

Latham Architects and Civic Regeneration Limited. 2002. *The Druid Quarter Masterplan and Regeneration Strategy.* Hinckley and Bosworth District Council.

Andrew Hyam
University of Leicester Archaeological Services
University of Leicester
University Road
Leicester

Tel: 0116 252 2848
Fax: 0116 252 2614

ah58@le.ac.uk

Appendix 1. Figures

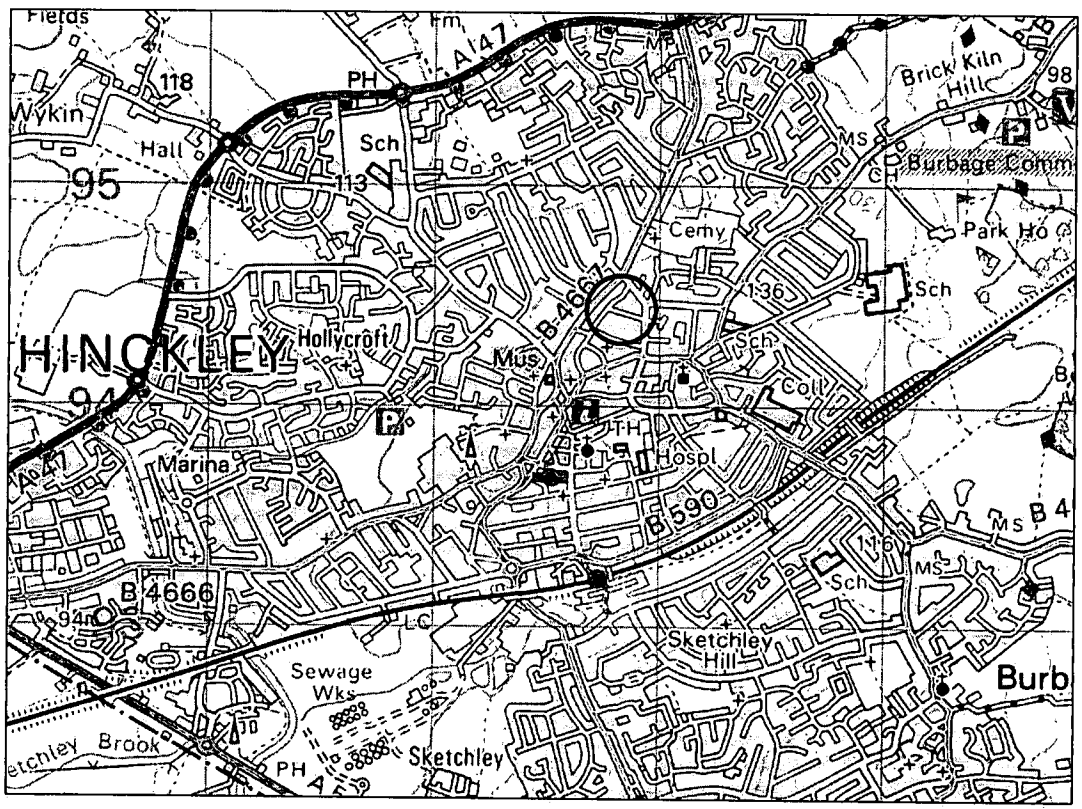

Figure 1. Hinckley and location of site.

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.



Figure 2. Site location.
Reproduced from HSSP Architects plan drawing no: 5921A-06a

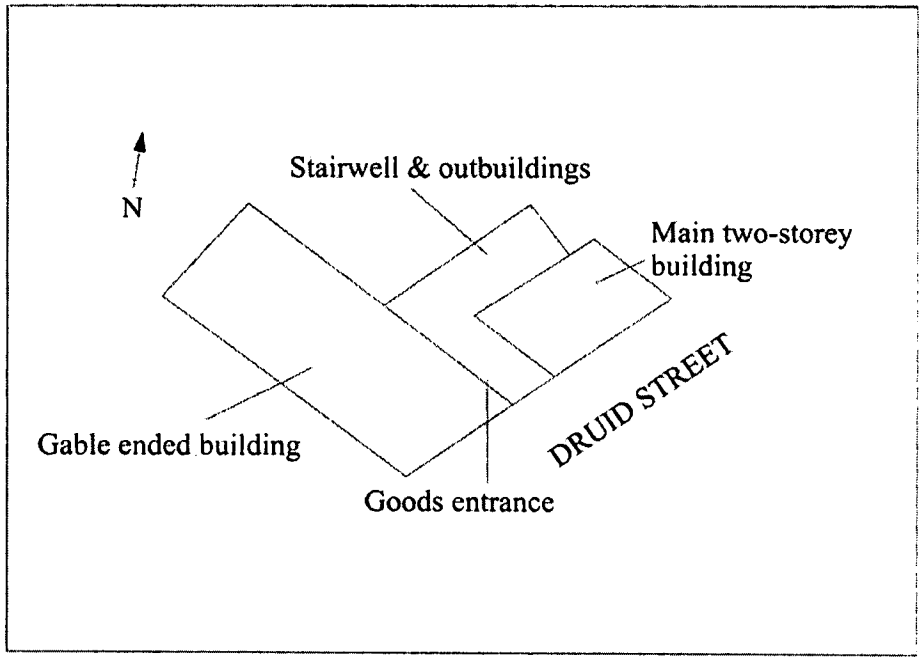

Figure 3. Schematic outline of the Laban Tansey Building.



Figure 4. 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:10560

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.

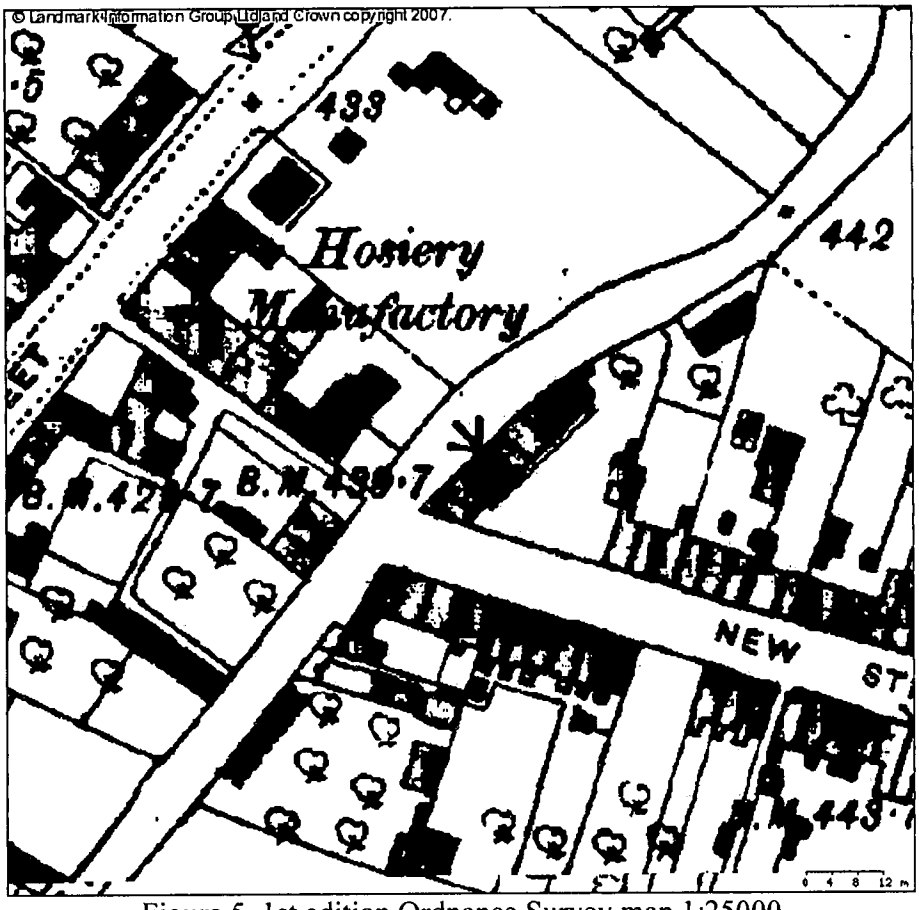

Figure 5. 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1:25000

Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown Copyright 1996. All rights reserved. Licence number AL 10009495.

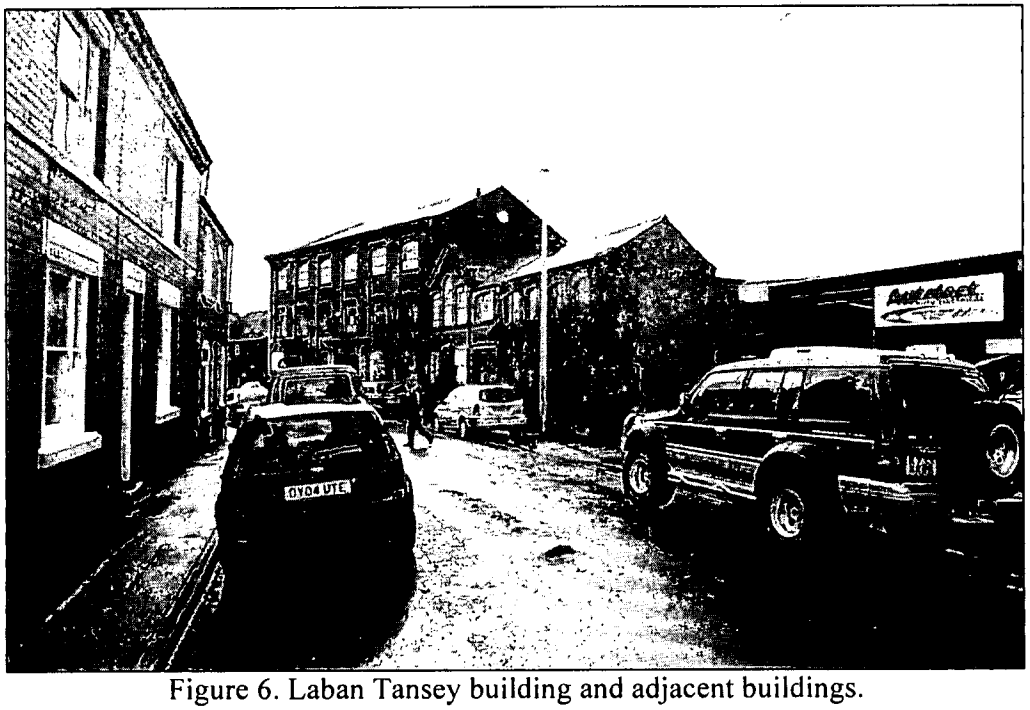

Figure 6. Laban Tansey building and adjacent buildings.
Looking south-west down Druid Street.

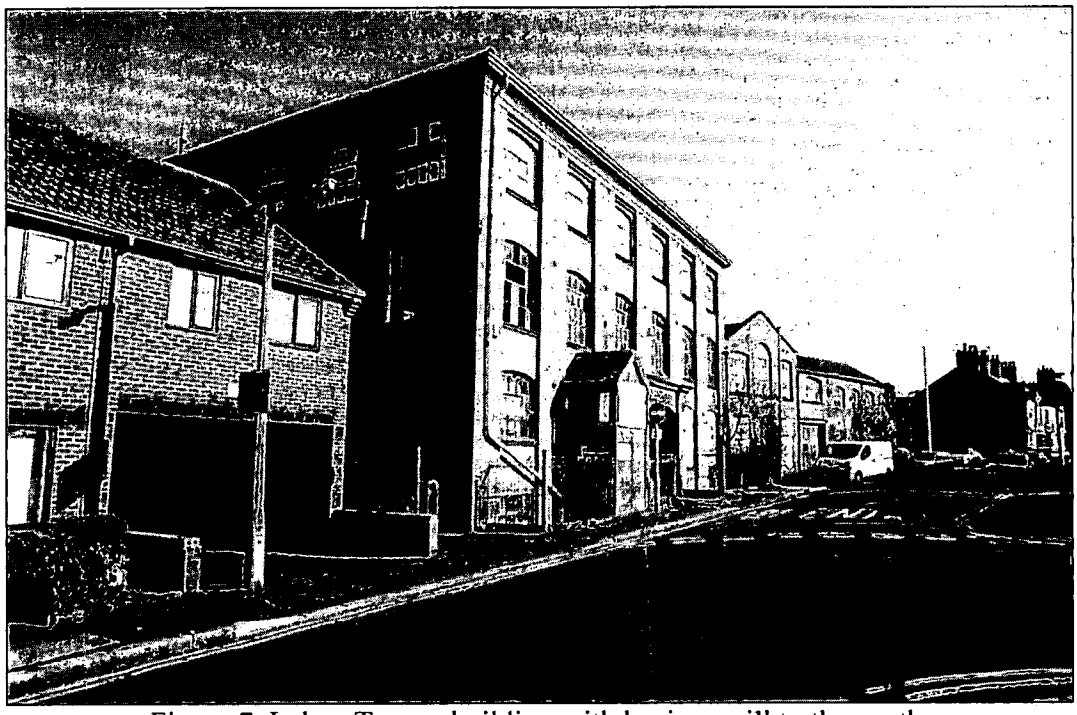

Figure 7. Laban Tansey building with hosiery mill to the south.
Looking north-west up Druid Street.



Figure 8. Laban Tansey building. Frontage.
Looking west.

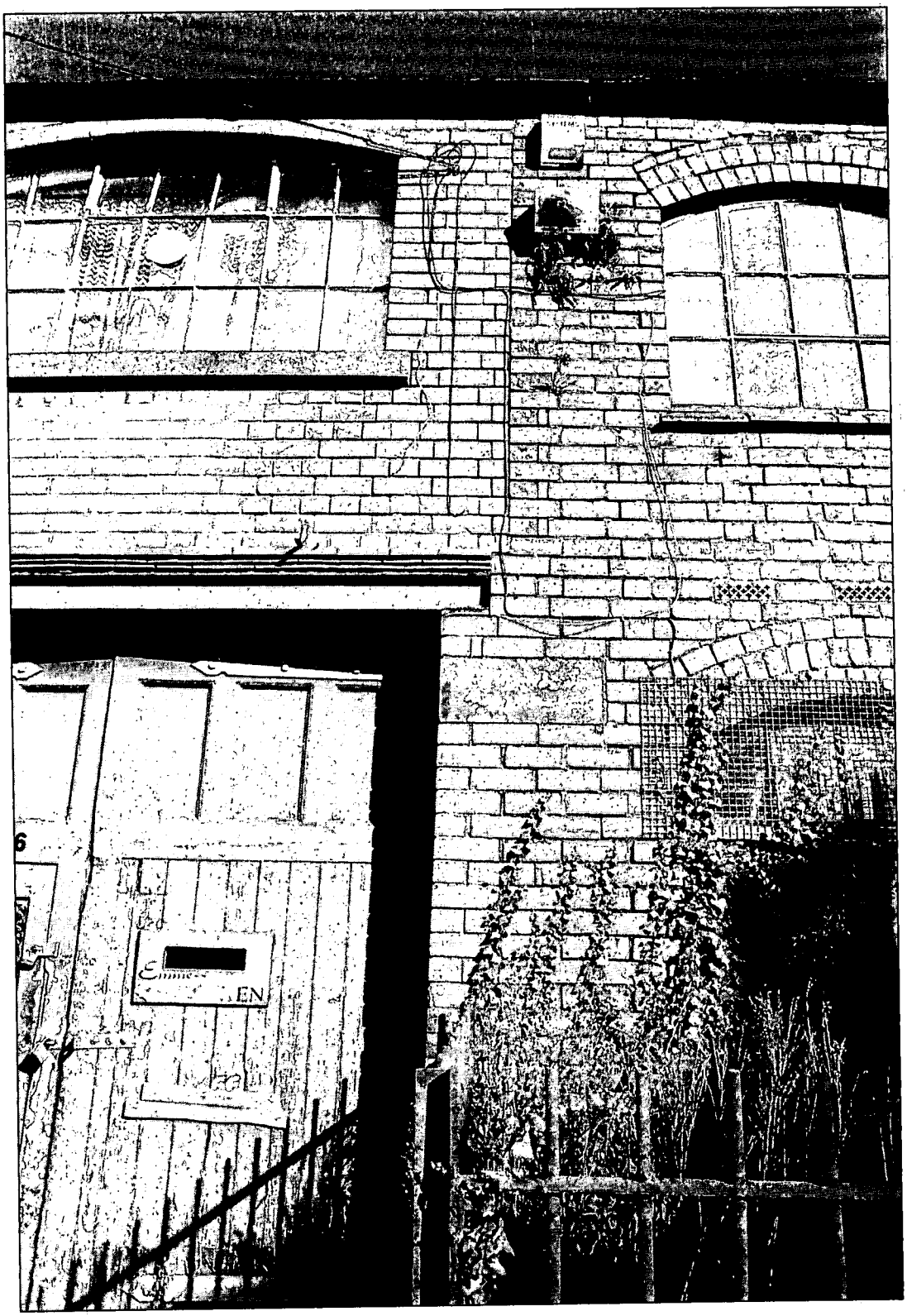

Figure 9. Laban Tansey Building. Joint between phases on frontage. Looking west.



Figure 10. North wall of main building.
Looking south-west.

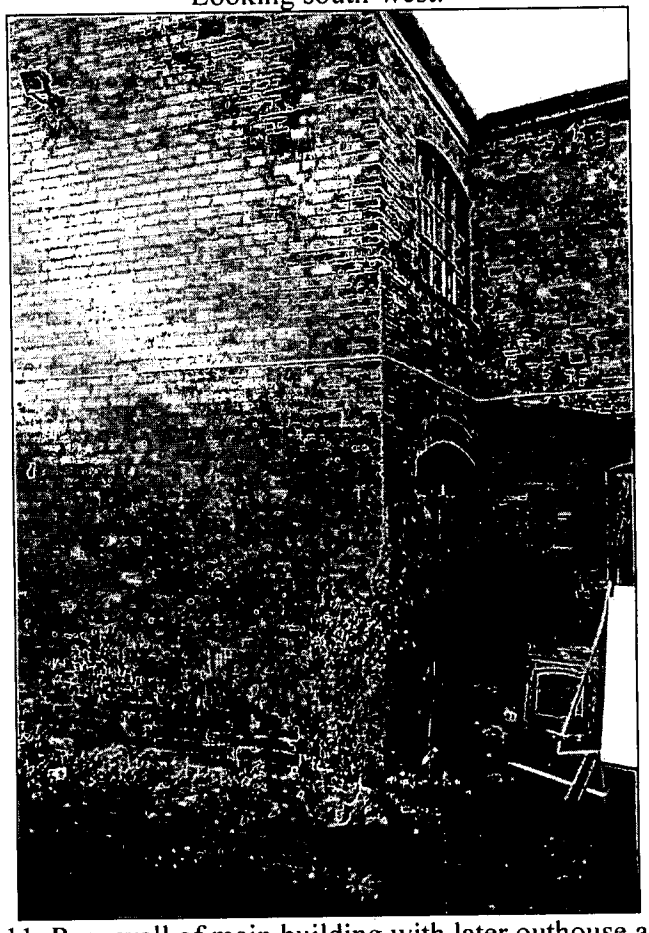

Figure 11. Rear wall of main building with later outhouse addition.
Looking south.

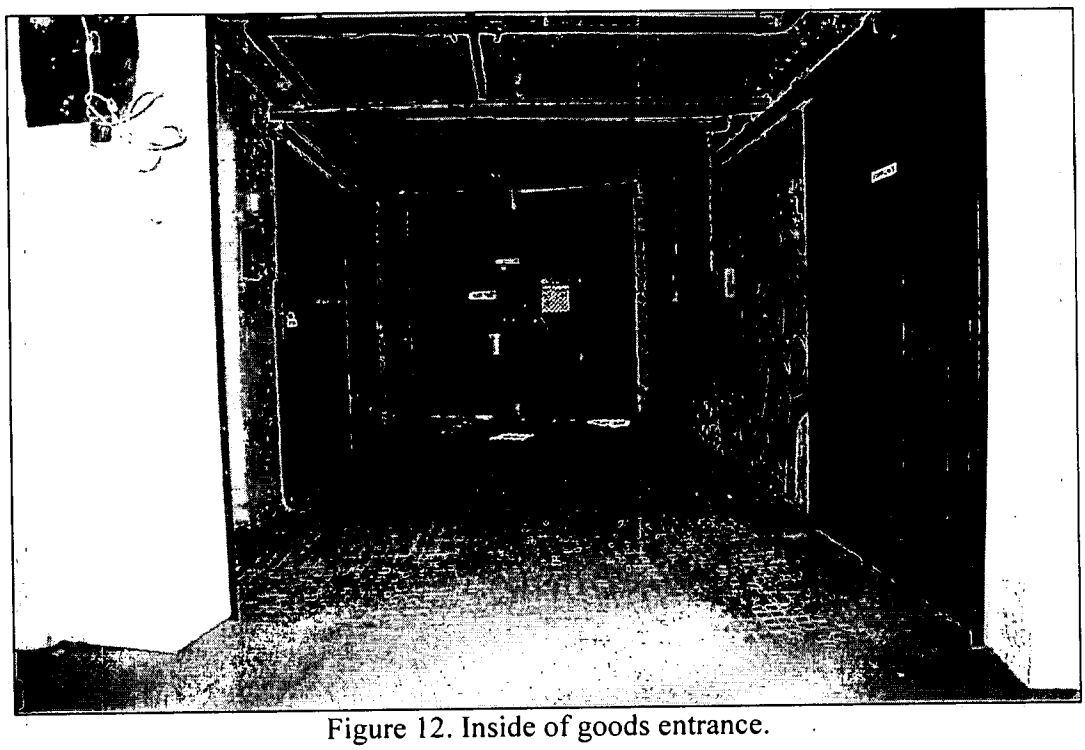

Figure 12. Inside of goods entrance.
Looking east.

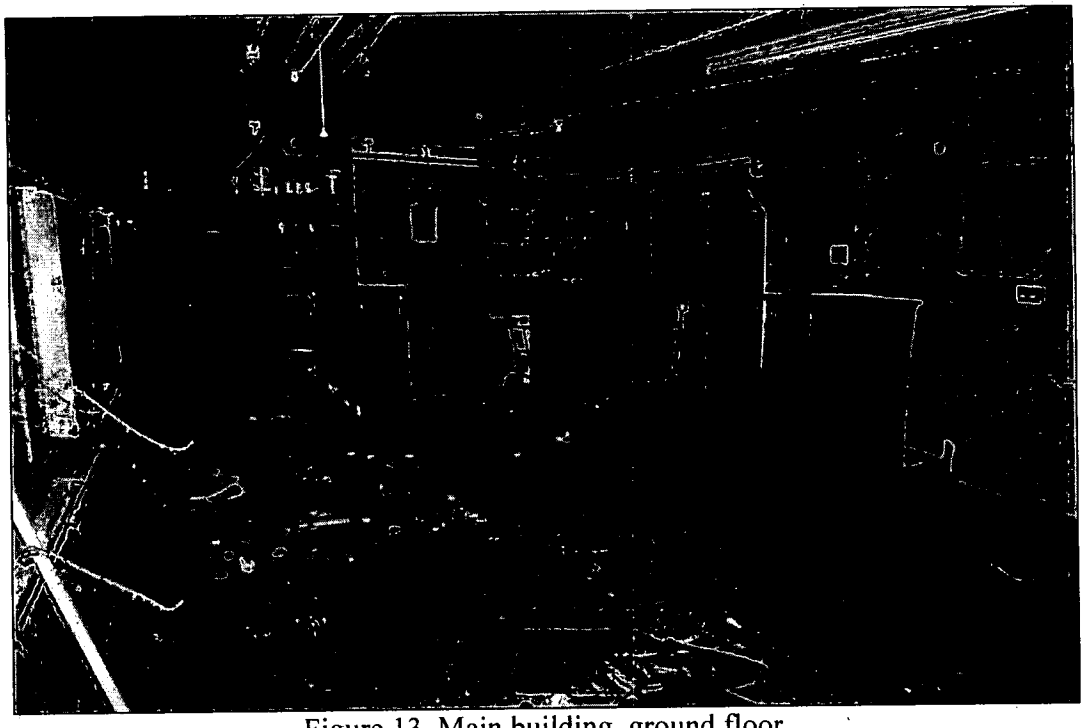

Figure 13. Main building, ground floor.
Blocked windows on rear wall and inserted doorway. Looking south-west.



Figure 14. Main building, ground floor.
Front windows and north wall. Looking north-east.

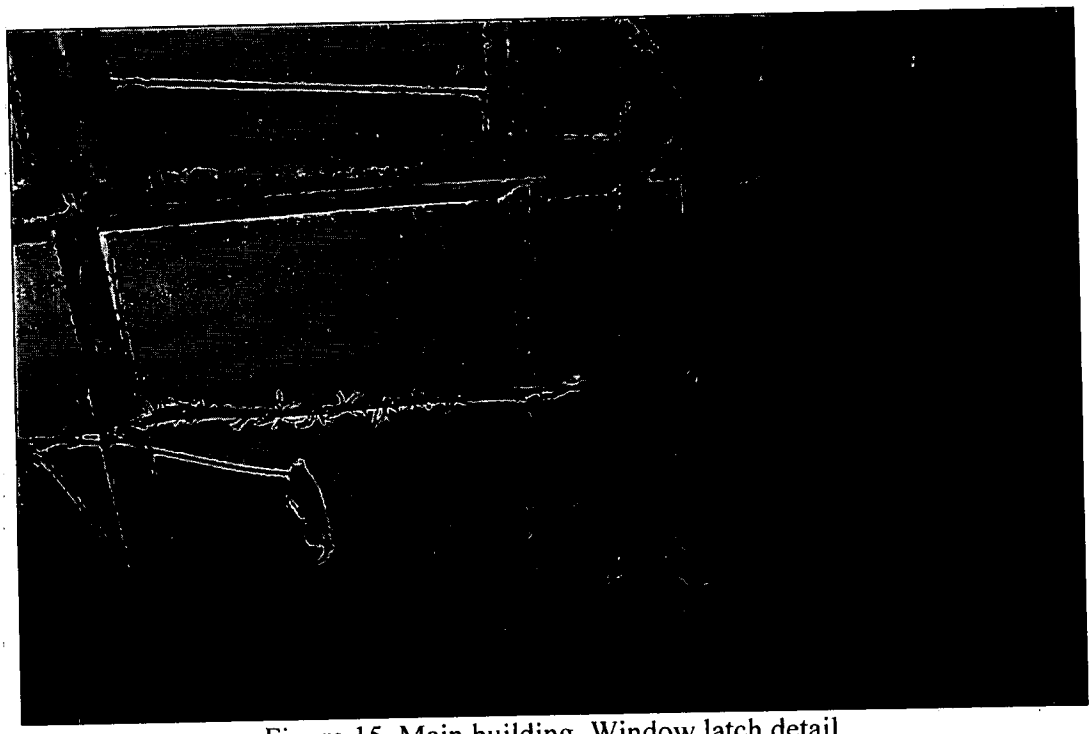

Figure 15. Main building. Window latch detail.



Figure 16. Main building, first floor.
Front windows. Looking north-east.

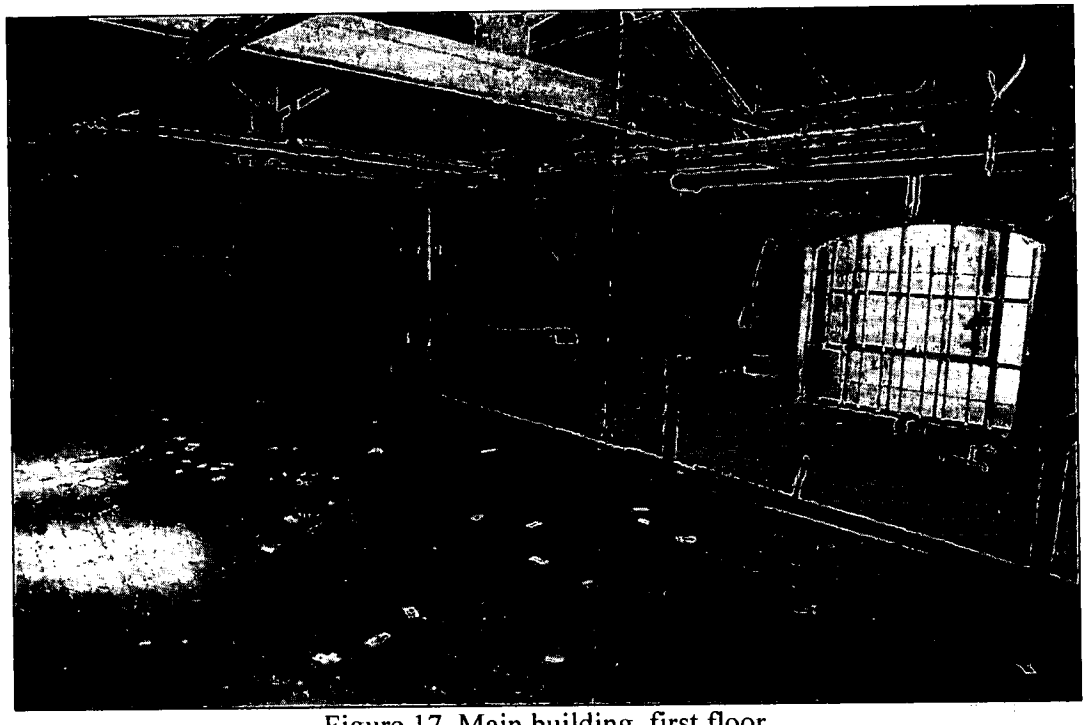

Figure 17. Main building, first floor.
Blocked windows on rear wall and inserted doorway. Looking south-west.

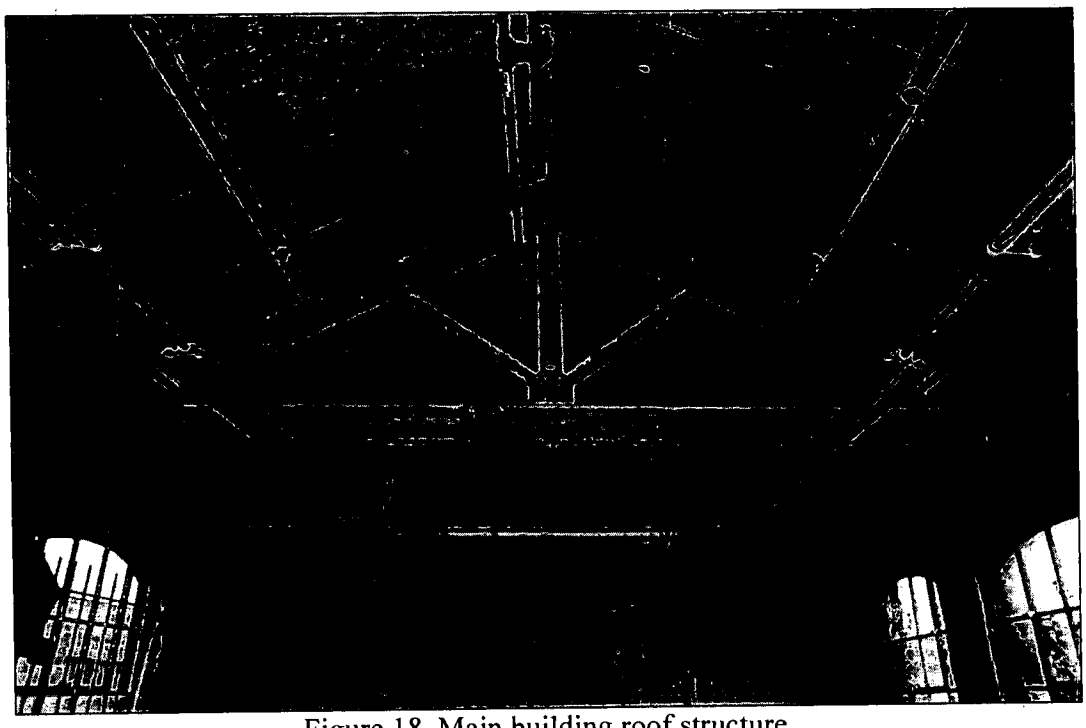

Figure 18. Main building roof structure.
Looking north.

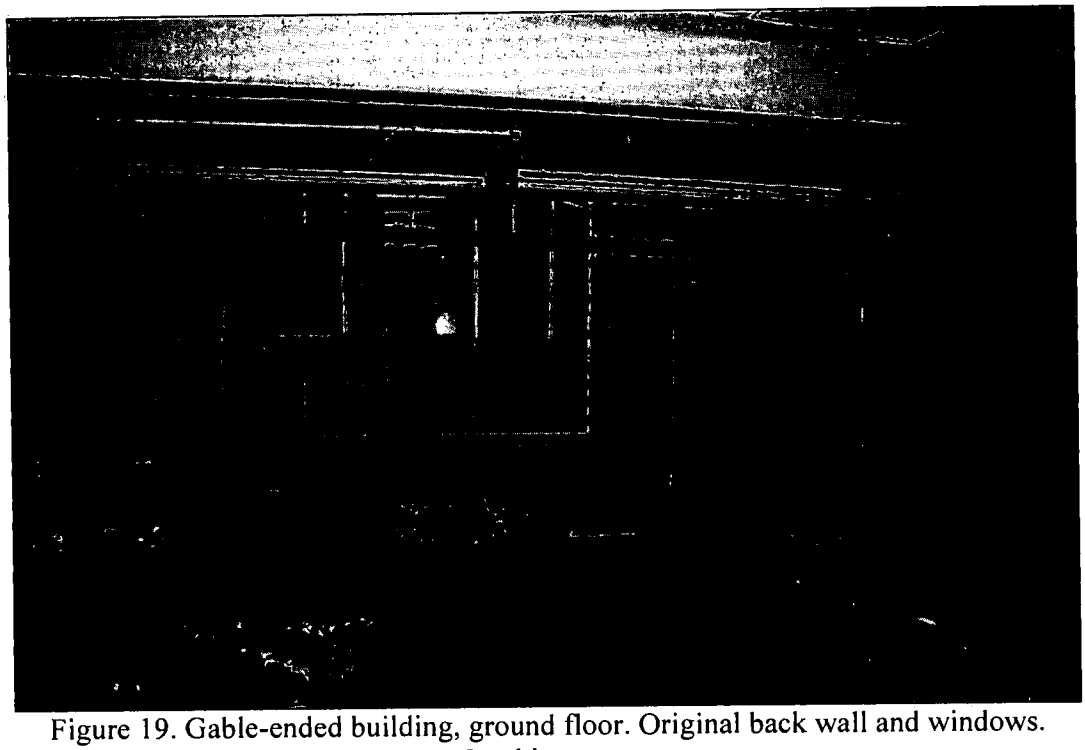

Figure 19. Gable-ended building, ground floor. Original back wall and windows.
Looking east.

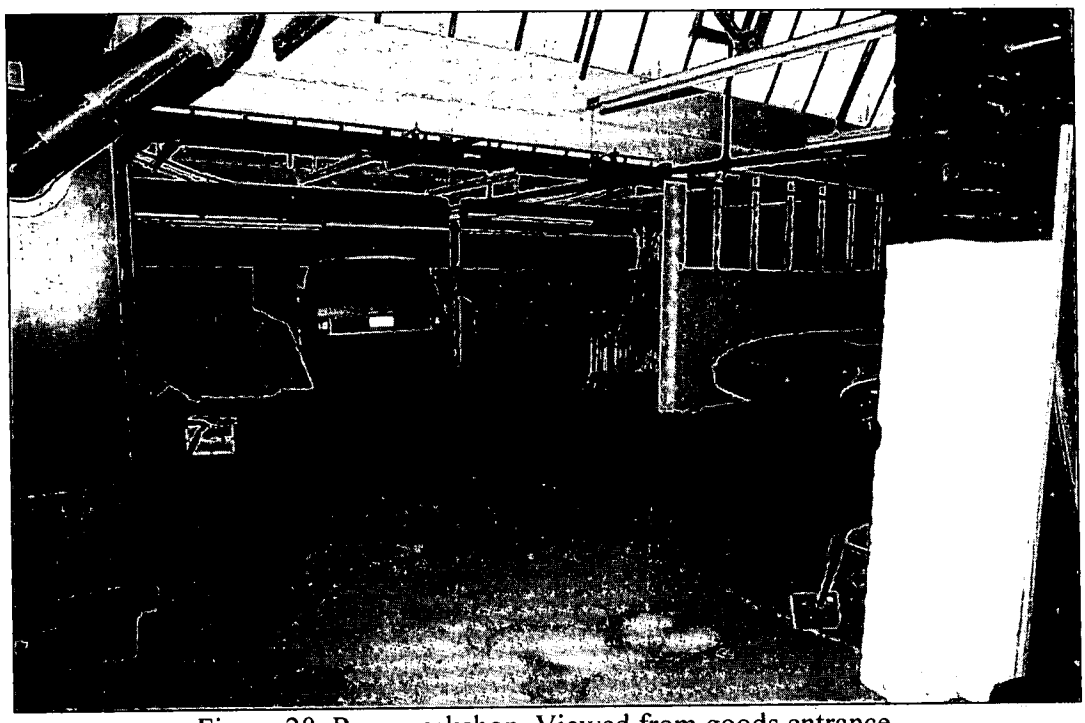

Figure 20. Rear workshop. Viewed from goods entrance.
Looking north-east.



Figure 21. Gable-ended building, first floor. Front windows.
Looking east.

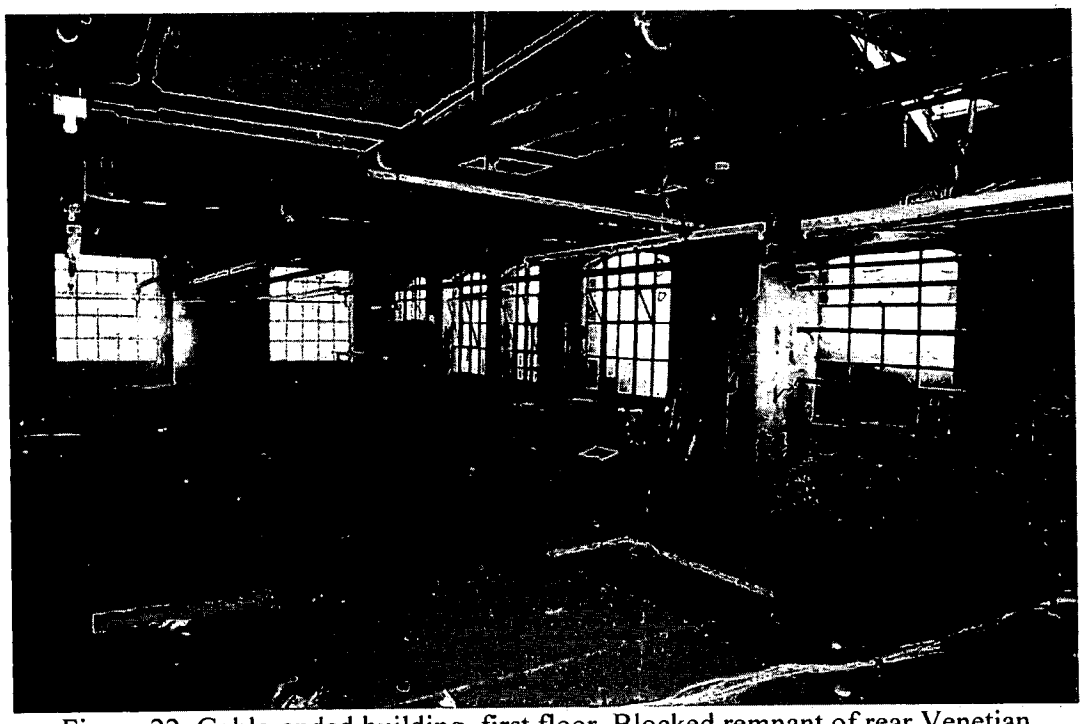

Figure 22. Gable-ended building, first floor. Blocked remnant of rear Venetian windows in gable.
Looking north-east.