

# Snowdown Colliery Kent



## Historic Building Assessment and Recording



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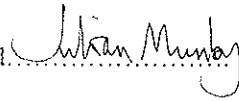
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# Snowdown Colliery, Kent

## *HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT AND RECORDING*

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# SNOWDOWN COLLIERY, KENT

## HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT AND RECORDING

### SUMMARY

*Oxford Archaeology (OA) has carried out a programme of building assessment and recording at Snowdown Colliery, Kent. The work is in advance of redevelopment of the site, which will probably involve demolition of all the former colliery buildings. Snowdown is the last of the former Kent coalmines with a significant number of surviving buildings. The colliery was started in 1907 and finally closed in 1988 after the bitter struggle of the early 1980's miners' strike.*

*There are twenty buildings including some major extensions surviving and most of these are probably from the mid-1920's reorganisation of the surface works. They range from small stores to very large winder houses and workshops. The majority are built in brick with steel roof trusses. Some of the larger buildings have girder frames incorporated into the brickwork and have developed serious structural defects with large vertical cracks in the brick pilasters.*

*A few of the buildings may be from the earlier years of the colliery and exhibit some finer detail in the brickwork. The latest building is the No. 2 winder house which is imposingly brutal and modern in style and was built by 1956. This still contains a large overhead travelling gantry hoist as does the earlier No. 3 winder house and power house.*

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by Campbell Reith Hill LLP to undertake a programme of rapid historic building assessment and recording at Snowdown Colliery, Kent (Figures 1 & 2). The work relates to the proposed redevelopment of the site. The development proposals comprise 7.5 hectares of light business and industrial units on the southern part of the site, with associated access, removal of the existing colliery buildings to be replaced by a memorial garden, and use of the remainder of the site for recreational purposes. The existing buildings are not listed. A similar but smaller study was conducted for SEED/English Partnership by OA in 2004 on the site of Betteshanger Colliery where only one building was still standing.

### 1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 The recording programme consisted of three main elements: a drawn survey, a photographic survey and a written survey. The drawn survey (Figure 2) consisted of a site plan based on a pre-existing survey made when the colliery was still in operation. This was annotated to show which buildings were still



standing and the identification numbers assigned to them for the purposes of this survey.

- 1.2.2 The photographic survey used 35 mm film (colour slide and black and white prints) and consisted of general views and specific details (external). The interiors of the buildings were not accessible because all entrances had been bricked up but a few interior views were obtained through holes in the blocking etc.
- 1.2.3 The written survey complemented the other surveys and consisted of descriptive notes to explain and interpret the buildings. The site work was undertaken entirely before the start of any demolition/development works. There was no watching brief element to the works (ie. recording after the start of building works to record previously obscured features).
- 1.2.4 The site work was undertaken on the 2nd and 3rd of November 2005. A project archive will be ordered and deposited with Kent Museum Services (or other agreed body). It will include all site drawings, photographs (contact sheets), slides, photographic negatives, a copy of this report and other site notes. A copy of this report will also be deposited with the Kent Sites and Monuments Record or other appropriate body.

### 1.3 Acknowledgements

- 1.3.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Campbell Reith Hill LLP for commissioning the work and the Coal Authority for providing a plan of the site.

## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1.1 It was first suggested that Coal measures may extend below Kent in 1855 and the first successful boring occurred near Dover in 1891. Subsequently many borings were made to locate the extent of the coalfield and by 1910 pits had been sunk at Tilmanstone, Guildford and Snowdown (VCH 1932, 381).
- 2.1.2 Snowdown was begun in 1907 by Arthur Burr and was the first pit in Kent to arrive at workable measures, the first coal being raised in November 1912. In January 1913 the Beresford seam, 4ft. 4 in. in thickness, was reached at a depth of 1,490ft. By 1915 500,000 tons of coal had been raised from this seam. Following this the No. 2 pit was sunk through the Snowdown Hard seam to the Deep seam which was 4ft. 7in thick at 3000ft deep (VCH 1932, 381).
- 2.1.3 A photograph of Snowdown in 1907 from the CHIK<sup>1</sup> website shows two winding gear towers, a large chimney and at least one gabled building that

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<sup>1</sup> Coalfield Heritage Initiative Kent, Dover District Council.



may be the first winding house. A photograph from 1912 on the same website shows two sets of headgear the large chimney and about three substantial buildings and a rail system. It is however difficult to identify the buildings exactly. The buildings near the chimney in the 1912 image may have been demolished and the building on the left of the photograph may be building No. 6 as numbered in the present survey.

- 2.1.4 In 1921 Snowdown miners went on strike due to reduced pay and the Snowdown Colliery Company went into receivership. The colliery was closed in 1922 but pumping was maintained and in 1924 it was purchased by Pearson & Dorman Long (CHIK website) who initially deepened No. 3 shaft and reorganised the surface arrangements. No. 1 shaft which was only sunk to a depth of 250 ft was by 1932 only being used for water supply purposes (VCH, 381).
- 2.1.5 By 1932 the reconstruction of surface facilities was completed. Pumping facilities and a tank with 16,000 gallon gross capacity were installed to supply water for general usage. Electrical winding equipment with locked coil winding ropes of 5.25in circumference was supplied by the English Electric company. The lamp room was designed to accommodate 2000 lamps and other buildings constructed and fitted out included a smithy, storeroom, fitting shop and tub-repairing shop (VCH 1932, 381).
- 2.1.6 Pearson & Dorman Long also built the village of Aylesham near the pit to house 650 workers families (CHIK website). Work started on the construction of Aylesham in September 1926, during the national miners' strike. The first phase was designed to comprise 400 homes, half to be built in brick and half in steel and concrete. The Dover Express records that 209 miners' returned to work at Snowdown in the Last week of September and produced 60 tons of coal in one shift while the other Kent miners were still withholding their labour (eastkent.freeuk).
- 2.1.7 Snowdown was one of the deepest collieries in Kent reaching over 3000ft., and was also the hottest and most humid being called 'Dante's Inferno' by the miners who often worked naked because this was more comfortable in the conditions (CHIK website).
- 2.1.8 Although Snowdown was nationalised in 1947 along with the three other viable Kent mines, (Betteshanger, Tilmanstone and Chislet) the freehold of the site did not pass to the Coal Board and this is one reason why the present buildings, which are the last survivals of the Kent Coalfield, are still standing (pers.comm. Lynda Pearce). The winding gear, heapsteads, coal processing plant and the pit head baths and canteen have however already gone.
- 2.1.9 The colliery closed in 1987 after the bitter struggles of the early 1980's miners' strike and the three shafts were capped in 1988 (plate 1). A memorial was erected in Aylesham in 2003 to the miners and others who worked at



Snowdown and the wives and families who lived the miners' way of life (plate 2).

## 2.2 Map Regression Analysis

2.2.1 The colliery was started in 1907 and the 1907 edition OS map which was revised to 1906 shows there was no development at all on the site at the time of the revision.

2.2.2 The next OS edition in Kent was 1929 but this was partial and did not cover Snowdown. So the first OS map showing the colliery buildings is the 1937 edition. The 1937 map (Figure 3) shows most of the major buildings that still survive were constructed by that date excepting building 2 the No. 2 Winder House. The pit head baths on the other side of the road from the main site were in existence by 1937 but have been demolished since the closure of the pit. The site of building 2 was occupied by an earlier building probably a smaller winder house. North-west of this was a large building with chimney which possibly produced power for the colliery via coal fired steam.

2.2.3 The 1956 OS map (Figure 4) shows that most of the other surviving buildings had been added by this time and these included buildings 3, 5, 8, and most notably building 2 the modern winder house with Koepe winder. Building 15 the prefab had replaced an earlier range of buildings existing in 1937. The canteen (now demolished) had been constructed next to the baths on the north-west side of the road.

2.2.4 The 1975 OS map shows little change excepting that the space between buildings 17 and 19 had been occupied by building 18. The large building with the chimney had been demolished and there had been substantial reorganisation of the narrow (mineral) and standard gauge railways around the site.

2.2.5 The detailed Coal Authority site plan of 1981 (see Figure 2) shows little change from 1975 but includes the uses of the buildings and has been used as the basis for the present survey. The functions of some of the buildings have probably changed during the lifetime of the colliery and this is discussed in the individual building descriptions below.

## 3 DESCRIPTION

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The present site lies on the south-east side of the public road (as shown in Figure 2), the pit head baths and canteen now demolished were on the other side of the road which the miners had to cross regularly. Buildings 6-9 and 14-15 lie along the road (plate 3) and the remainder of the surviving buildings (plates 4-6) lie just to the south-east of these in three main blocks, buildings 1





& 2 to the north, 10 & 11 in the centre and 17-20 on the south with various other small buildings located around the site. The whole colliery site stretches some distance further to the south east where the coal preparation plant and colliery sidings were situated but these have now gone. The area has become grown over with silver birch and other trees and certain types of lichen and fungi and other fauna which is suited to the particular environmental conditions. Various parts of the site including areas near the buildings are ecologically sensitive and important for lichen heath and certain invertebrates, plants and reptiles (pers. comm. David Smith).

3.1.2 Twenty surviving buildings or main phases of construction were identified and are described below in numerical order. The numbers which are included on the site plan (fig. 2) have been allocated by OA purely for identification purposes and bear no relation to the significance of the buildings. Following the description for each building there is a short paragraph discussing the building's significance. Photographic plates referred to in the text appear together at the end of the report.

3.1.3 Although the survey was intended as an external one because the interiors of the buildings were not accessible it was however possible to see into the interiors of some of the larger buildings. In these cases the interiors have been described because this has afforded a greater understanding of the buildings structure, function and present condition.

3.1.4 The building dimensions quoted were scaled off the 1:500 Coal Authority plan to the nearest 0.5m, no measurements were taken in the field as part of the survey.

## 3.2 Building Descriptions

### 3.2.1 Building 1: Fan House

*Dimensions:* 17.5m x 16.5m (originally 16.5m x 27m)

*Description:* Built of red brick in english bond. Central rectangular plan tower with flat topped side chambers and gabled north-west wing, south-east wing demolished (plate. 7). The entrances have been blocked. Corbelled stepped detail to the base of the gable cornice. There are large circular openings about 3.0m in diameter, voussoired in brick, leading from either side chamber to both sides of the base of the tower (plate 8). There are remnants of iron ducts or housings between the circular openings particularly on the south-west side (plate 9). The lower part of the remaining wall of the demolished section has glazed blue and white tiles (plate 10) and there are two large concrete bases for fixing some plant or machinery against the wall (plate 11). The end walls of the tower are supported on concrete lintels the ends of which rest on the tops of the circular brick arches. Some of the brickwork adjoining the north-east arch is has been demolished and in time further deterioration of this



would render the tower unstable. The tower appears to be divided down the centre and is presumably either a vent for expelling foul air from the mine or drawing clean air in or both. The function of the fan house was to circulate the air around a mine to remove foul air and gasses and bring in clean air and there would be special doors and flaps in the mine shafts and tunnels to control the flow. The fan machinery has presumably all been removed unless some survives within the gabled wing; it may have been powered by steam originally and later by electricity.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* Of importance as a building with a very specific form and with features relating to its former essential function within the colliery. The building is however partially demolished and now in a deteriorated and possibly dangerous condition. There may be further features and fittings relating to former use inside the closed section.

### 3.2.2 **Building 2: No 2 (Koepe) Winder House**

*Dimensions:* 27m x 16.5m

*Description:* Huge functional modern flat roofed rectangular plan brick block with higher square section to the south-west (plate 12). Built against the north-east wall of the Fan House. The walls are of darkish brick laid in stretcher bond with huge concrete framed windows and a row of four square higher blocked openings in the north-west and south-east walls, a small blocked door in the north-west wall gives a sense of the enormous scale of the building. There are also six high square blocked openings in the north-east wall of the main room. The lower north-east section also has a huge window in the north-west wall and a large blocked entrance in the north-east wall with a long raised concrete panel above.

The building has a massive frame of reinforced concrete uprights and beams, which can be seen behind the windows. The frame supports a huge gantry hoist which spans the high square room and runs on wheels on the top of a concrete beam (plate 13), the frame then continues up to support the roof. The lower parts of the walls in the large room are covered in blue glazed tiles and the hoist chain runs into a rectangular aperture in the floor.

This building would have housed the winding engine for No 2 shaft which is to the south-west. There is a blocked rectangular opening halfway up the south-west wall which is otherwise blank (plate 14), this was probably for the winder cable to pass through as it is positioned in line with No. 2 shaft. There is possibly only one opening because this building housed a Koepe winder in which both cages are connected to the same cable which is driven by the frictional resistance of the cable to the wheel or sheave instead of being wound onto a winding drum as in conventional winders.



This is the only building in the modern style on the site and probably dates from around the early 1950s and may represent new investment in the site after nationalisation in 1947. It replaces an earlier building (see 1937 map, fig. 3) which may have housed a steam powered winder.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1956 OS map

*Significance:* Powerful brutal modern industrial building designed for a specific function but in the 1940s-50s style and thus contrasting with building 10 built for a similar function in the 1920s. Illustrates changes in architectural style of industrial buildings. The internal frame and bay rhythm is not reflected in the external walls as with the earlier buildings and all references to traditional and historic forms have gone.

### 3.2.3 Building 3; Explosives Store

*Dimensions:* 14m x 5m

*Description:* Low plain rectangular flat roofed brick building (plate 15). Built in brick laid in english bond with two blocked door openings on the north-east side, probably mid twentieth century in date.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1956 OS map

*Significance:* Of local interest as part of the former colliery with a specific function but the building itself has no external features of architectural or historic importance.

### 3.2.4 Building 4: Vehicle Repair Shop (in 1981)

*Dimensions:* 16.5m x 8m

*Description:* Rectangular building of four bays built in brick in english bond with gabled roof clad in corrugated asbestos with later lean-to extensions in brick and metal panels at north-east end (plate 16). The bays are divided by flat piers in the brickwork and contain window openings with concrete sills and lintels, which have been infilled with concrete blocks. The north-east gable has two shallow piers and a corbelled crow-step detail to its lower edge as on building 1 and some others. The south-west gable end has been rebuilt in plain brick with a large opening that has been infilled with concrete blocks.

The large later opening in the south-west end would have been for vehicles to enter the building for repair. This suggests either that the building had a different function when first constructed or that it was necessary to make access for larger vehicles than those originally used.

This is one of the smaller buildings probably dating from the 1920s. On the 1937 and 1956 maps this building has standard and narrow gauge railways running to it but these have gone by 1975. In 1981 it is described as the vehicle repair shop so it would appear that the function of this building might have changed. In commentary by George Garrity on a 1999 photograph of



colliery buildings this building is described as 'the old Electrical workshop'(eastkent.freeuk).

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map with the brick lean-to at the north-east end, the lean-to is extended to fill in the north-east corner on the 1956 map.

*Significance:* Of interest as a former colliery building but with no special external features relating to its former use.

### 3.2.5 **Building 5: Tank and pump house**

*Dimensions:* 5m x 2.5m

*Description:* Small rectangular two bay gabled brick building (plate 17) adjacent to large rectangular sunken brick lined tank (plate 18). The building is of brick laid in english bond. It has a blocked window opening in each bay on both sides of the building and a blocked door at either end.

The brick lined tank is currently dry and has been used as a dump for old refrigerators and other refuse. This was possibly a holding tank or settling tank for water pumped from the mines or may have been the tank for general water supply. The building was probably a pumphouse for pumping water to and/or from the tank.

*Map evidence:* The tank is shown on the 1937 OS map, the building first appears on the 1956 map.

*Significance:* Of some local interest as part of the colliery and built for a specific purpose but the structures themselves have no external features of historic importance.

### 3.2.6 **Building 6: Offices in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 17.5m x 16.5m (originally 16.5m x 27m)

*Description:* Long rectangular single storey brick building of seven bays (plate 19). Constructed in brick laid in flemish bond unlike the other buildings which are mostly laid in english bond. The seven bays on either side and three bays at each are divided by shallow piers which end in a connecting band below eaves level. The gables have stepped detail on their lower edges and are corbelled out in chamfered bricks as is the band mentioned above, there is also a plinth, which is topped, in chamfered bricks (plate 20). The gables also contain a circular opening in brick with four raised imitation voussoirs. The central bays at the ends and sides originally had large openings beneath segmental brick arches, these have all had smaller openings with brick surrounds inserted later and finally been blocked with concrete blocks. The central bay on the south-east side has had a later lintel placed across the bay to support an upper wall with a door which itself cuts across an earlier blocking of the bay. All the other bays contain similar round arched window openings



which have mostly been infilled with concrete blocks but some have been blocked with bricks whilst others had flat concrete lintels inserted before being later blocked up.

By 1981 this building was being used as offices but its design appears to be for a more industrial function especially with the large size of the original door and window openings. It is unusual (in comparison with the other buildings) in being built in flemish bond and may be one of the earlier buildings on the site.

In commentary by George Garrity on a 1999 photograph of colliery buildings this building is described as 'Rescue and Control rooms'(eastkent.freeuk).

**Map evidence:** Shown on the 1937 OS map

**Significance:** Possibly one of the earlier buildings with some interesting detail to the brickwork. This building had a change of function later to office use. Its original function is not known, the interior was not seen and may retain features relating to former use.

### 3.2.7 **Building 7: Offices**

**Dimensions:** 18m x 10.5m

**Description:** Two storey seven bay rectangular brick building fronting the road on the north-west side of site (plate 21) The north-east gable faces the south-west gable of building 6, between them was the access to the miners buildings on the other side of the road including the pit head baths and canteen.

The walls are of plain red brick laid in stretcher bond on a plinth laid in english bond and topped by chamfered engineering bricks, the plinth also contains some attractive brown glazed ceramic air 'bricks'. The roof is pitched with coped parapetted gables the coping, kneelers and corbels appear to be of concrete. The roof is clad in corrugated roofing sheets, probably made from asbestos. There is a gable stack at the south-west end and a stack projecting from the south-east slope of the roof between the second and third bays from the north-east.

The elevation facing the road (plate 22) is partially obscured by vegetation but there are several flat headed blocked window openings and blocked ground floor opening and a blocked round brick arch in the second bay from the north-east end. The south-east elevation contains seven first floor openings with flat heads at eaves level and concrete sills, six of these are roughly square window openings four of which are blocked in cement blocks and two of which retain crittal frames. The south-east opening was an upper door; there are fittings either side for attaching the rails of an outside stair.



The ground floor has five window openings with concrete lintels blocked with cement blocks and a central gap in the plinth for a former door opening which has been blocked in brick bonded in to the walls.

The north-east gable has five widow openings with concrete sills blocked in cement blocks and at the south-west end a large area of more recently pointed brickwork extending across both floors which might be an area of blocking or rebuilding.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* Of local interest as the main office of the colliery, the only two storey building on the site.

### 3.2.8 **Building 8: Part of Main Offices Block in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 12m x 12m

*Description:* This is a single storey later infill between buildings 7 and 9 and is constructed in plain red brick in stretcher bond which is bonded into the south-west end of building 7 (plate 23). It was probably flat roofed as there is no gabled roof scar on the end of building 7 but the roof has gone. There are four blocked windows with flat concrete sills in the south-east elevation.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1956 OS map

*Significance:* A later extension to the office which is simply a later infill between buildings and is now roofless with no features of interest.

### 3.2.9 **Building 9: Part of Main Office Block in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 21.5m x 8m (originally 16.5m long with 5m later extension)

*Description:* Relatively small six bay brick building with gabled roof (plate 24). The walls are in english bond with flat piers separating the bays, there is a chamfered plinth below and a course of coggling at the tops of the recessed bays and below the gable eaves. There are five blocked window openings with concrete sills and lintels in the south-east wall and a blocked door in the second bay from the north end. These openings were possibly later insertions. There are original circular openings in the gables with brick surrounds (plate 25). The roof trusses are of angle iron and the roof has lost most of its slate tile cladding. There is a modern brick single bay flat roofed extension in stretcher bond at the south west end.

In commentary by George Garrity on a 1999 photograph of colliery buildings this building is described as 'the Surveying and Engineering offices' (eastkent.freeuk).

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map with a small square building immediately to the south-west this was demolished after 1956 and the small modern south-west extension appears on the 1975 map.



*Significance:* This building which had become part of or attached to the office block by 1981 was possibly originally constructed for a more industrial function and may be one of the earlier buildings on the site with some nice detailing to the brickwork.

### 3.2.10 **Building 10: Power House and No. 3 Winder House**

*Dimensions:* 43.5m x 15m

*Description:* Very large high hangar like eleven bay brick building with gabled roof with raised skylight housing along the ridge and inspection walkway (plate 26). Constructed in red brick in english bond with eleven recessed bays divided by shallow pilasters. There is a base plinth capped with chamfered engineering bricks and corbelled courses at tops of bays and eaves and upper string course of engineering bricks. The gables are parapetted and coped and the end gable walls are in three bays with stepped corbel courses at the base of the eaves. There is a blocked circular opening in the pediment of the north-west gable and two blocked entrances below (plate 27). The corner piers at the south-west end have been rebuilt in lighter brick in stretcher bond and several of the other piers exhibit long vertical cracks. There are large blocked window openings with concrete lintels in most bays. The second bay from the south-west end is wider than the other bays and was originally open on the south-east side but has been blocked in brick later. There are two steel-framed openings within the blocking which have been infilled with cement blocks (plate 28).

There are blocked door openings in the end walls and one of these had been broken open and a mesh grill had been fixed over the hole. This gave a view of the interior which revealed that internally there are trellis girders partially embedded in the walls between the bays (plate 29). These support horizontal girders for a large gantry hoist to travel on which is still in situ. The roof trusses are of angle iron and the ends are embedded in the tops of the walls. Large crissall window frames are in place behind the blocking. The upper walls are rendered and the lower wall surface is clad in glazed white and blue tiles similar to the wall exposed on the demolished part of the fan house.

The south-west end of the building was the No 3 winder house and the blocked opening on the side wall was probably for installing the winding engine and for the cables to pass up to the winding gear over No 3 shaft. The steel-framed openings were for the cables from the winding drum to continue to pass through after the large opening was blocked.

The other end of the building was the power house where electricity from the national grid was redistributed for use throughout the colliery both above and below ground.

The cracking in some of the piers may be the result of the embedded girders corroding and swelling within the brickwork and/or possibly from stresses



induced by the weight and use of the overhead gantry which may explain why the southern corner piers have been rebuilt.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* One of the largest and most impressive surviving buildings on the site which had an important and specific function as the winding house for No 3 shaft. With surviving features relating to its function including the wider bay with the blocked openings for the winding cables and the large overhead gantry hoist.

### 3.2.11 **Building 11: Lamp Room**

*Dimensions:* 18m x 16m

*Description:* Brick building adjacent to south-east side of north-east end of building 10 (plate 30). Of brick in english bond with chamfered plinth, flat pilasters between bays and dentilation at the top of the recessed bays and below the eaves in the gable walls. The roof is pitched with plain gables and clad in slate tiles and has a higher central skylight section along the ridge which is in a state of collapse.

The north-east end wall has three bays and is odd in having the easternmost bay set back from the rest of the wall (plate 31). Each bay has a now blocked round arch headed opening, the westernmost one was a door the other two were windows. The south-west end wall has two smaller blocked round arched openings to each bay two of which were doors and both gables have a blocked central circular opening in the upper wall. The south-east wall is divided into four bays, the northernmost of which is longer than the others and contains a single blocked door. The other three bays each contain a large blocked round headed window opening and a later door opening with a concrete lintel and jambs of bullnosed engineering bricks has been inserted between the central bays.

The narrow space between this building and building 10 has been covered by a later reinforced concrete roof and enclosed by brick walls for use in connection with the lamp room functions (plate 32).

Later extensions to the north-east wall and a link from the south-west wall to the No. 3 heapstead have been demolished.

Lamp rooms were for the storage and maintenance of the miners' cap lamps and safety lamps etc. Electric cap lamps would be issued from here at the start of shifts and returned for charging at the end. The Snowdown lamp room was designed to accommodate 2000 lamps (VCH 1932, 381).

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map, the space between 10 and 11 had also been built on by this time.

*Significance:* Of regional interest as a building with a very specific and important function relating to the mining industry. Dating from the 1920's and





with a few more decorative features than the other 1920's buildings such as round arches to windows and doors and dentilation in brick on the eaves and gables.

### 3.2.12 **Building 12: Pump house, lavatories and tank**

*Dimensions:* 11.5m x 5m (overall)

*Description:* Small brick block adjacent to the south-west end of building 10 which contains two rows of toilet cubicles in separate roofed sections and a wider flat roofed section open on the south-east side (plates. 33-4).

On the 1981 plan this is labelled 'Pump house' and 'Tank'.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* Of some local interest as part of the colliery facilities but the building itself has no features of historic importance.

### 3.2.13 **Building 13: Cement Store (in 1981)**

*Dimensions:* 10m x 6m

*Description:* Small plain brick building with pitched roof clad in corrugated asbestos over wooden boards. Constructed of red brick in english bond with plain walls. There are two openings with jambs of bullnosed engineering bricks and wooden shutters in the north-west wall (plate 35) and a blocked door with similar jambs in the south-east wall.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* A small plain building with a storage function not unique to the coal industry and of no external architectural or historic importance.

### 3.2.14 **Building 14: Archives in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 20.5m x 6m

*Description:* Narrow rectangular building alongside the road and next to the main gate in the south-west part of the site (plate 36). A single storey brick building one bay wide and five bays long with a pitched roof and a small gable over the entrance in the central bay on the south-east side. There are two chimneys projecting from the ridge each set one bay in from the end walls. The roof is clad in slates with a ridge of clay ridge.

The building is constructed in red brick in using a mixture of bonds. There is a chamfered plinth in flemish bond and eaves courses in english bond and the recessed panels between flat pilasters are infilled in stretcher bond in lighter brick. The side and end bays each contain one blocked window opening with a flat arched head in rubbed and gauged brick. The central bay below the small gable contains a blocked doorway with a round arch with projecting keystone in rubbed and gauged brick, reached by a short flight of steps (plate 37). This



building was used for archives in 1981. Traffic leaving and entering the site passes in front of this building.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* The slightly more decorative entrance and the rubbed and gauged arches and the chimneys showing that the rooms were heated suggest this may have been an office originally. The style of the building also indicates it may be one of the earlier buildings predating the 1920's reorganisation.

### 3.2.15 **Building 15: Housing Department in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 19m x 6m

*Description:* Single storey prefabricated building of 10 bays (plate 38). Concrete frame with walls made up of concrete panels. The former door and window openings have been infilled later with concrete blocks. The pitched roof is clad in corrugated asbestos sheets.

A typical mid twentieth century functional prefabricated building erected. This was the housing department in 1981 and may have been erected for this purpose or for a different function originally.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1956 OS map on the site of a demolished earlier range of buildings shown on the 1937 map

*Significance:* Mid twentieth century prefabricated building of no historical importance.

### 3.2.16 **Building 16: Locomotive shed**

*Dimensions:* 13.5m x 10m

*Description:* Four bay brick building with pitched roof in south-west corner of site (plate 39). Built of red brick in english bond with flat pilasters between recessed bays. Gable eaves with stepped corbelling. Roof with plain gables clad in corrugated asbestos with a louvered ventilator in the ridge. Several large openings with concrete lintels in the side bays have been blocked in brick. There are two large entrances for locomotives in the south-east end with concrete lintels and jambs of bullnosed engineering bricks, now infilled with concrete blocks (plate 40). This building is on a different alignment to all the other structures because it is aligned to the adjacent main railway line. There are two rail tracks leading from the blocked locomotive doors and presumably the building was designed to house two colliery locomotives.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* Of local interest as a building designed for a specific purpose with features relating to its function showing the importance of rail transport to the working of the colliery.



### 3.2.17 **Building 17: Stores in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 26.5m x 13.5m

*Description:* Large building eight bays long and three bays in width constructed in red brick laid in english bond (plate 41). The roof is gabled and clad in corrugated asbestos with a raised skylight along the ridge with an external iron walkway and rail accessed by an iron ladder at the gable end. Flat pilasters divide recessed bays and there is stepped corbelling on the gable eaves. Many of the bays have large openings below concrete lintels some still contain large crittal window frames, some are blocked in concrete blockwork and some in recessed brickwork. There is a chimney stack rising from the north-west corner.

The south-west end wall has a large blocked entrance in the central bay and two large crittal windows in the side bays (plate 42). The pilasters at this end have been rendered or rebuilt/refaced in concrete probably due to cracking as is seen in the pilasters of some of the other large buildings.

A hole, now meshed over, that has been made in the central opening afforded a view of the interior (plate 43). Vertical iron girders embedded in the walls support the angle iron roof trusses between each bay. The girders have brackets near the top, which may have supported a rail for an overhead gantry. The north-east end bay has a low mezzanine floor spanning it with bricked in sections beneath on either side creating small rooms either side of the entrance.

A standard gauge rail track entered the building through the south-west end, presumably so supplies delivered by rail could be brought into the building for unloading.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* A large industrial building of the same design as, and contemporary to several others at Snowdown from the 1920's. This was the stores building and as such has no features of particular historical importance or that are specific to the coal industry.

### 3.2.18 **Building 18: Mine Car Repairs in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 26.5m x 6.5m

*Description:* Later building created by enclosing and roofing the space between buildings 17 and 19 thus obviating the necessity for side walls.

The end walls are built in brick in three bays with flat pilasters, there are three blocked openings in the lower north-east end and three upper and one central lower blocked opening in the south-west end wall (see plate 42). A narrow gauge rail ran into the building through the central south-west opening for the coal tubs to be brought in for repair.



The interior (plate 44) was viewed through a hole in the blocking of the south-east entrance. The roof is supported on posts consisting of freestanding vertical I-section RSJ type girders placed in the same bay rhythm as the flanking buildings; horizontal girders link the posts near the top. The trusses are formed of angled girders rising from the top of the posts braced with a small triangular bracket-plate. The roof is clad in corrugated sheets with a skylight along the ridge. As with building 17 there are brackets near the top of the vertical girders which may have supported a rail for a moving overhead gantry. The present end walls may be earlier than the roof structure as a line defining the ends of the building is shown on the 1956 OS map. This may suggest that the building was under construction or reconstruction at this time.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1975 OS map, the end walls or something in their place but no roof is shown on the 1956 map.

*Significance:* A later building created by infilling and covering a space between existing structures for a particular purpose. Some internal features relating to the buildings function may survive.

### 3.2.19 **Building 19: Fitting Workshop and Blacksmith's Workshop in 1981**

*Dimensions:* 33m x 22m

*Description:* Large double gabled brick building, ten bays in length and six nominal bays in width (three per gable) (plate 45). The double roof has plain gables and is clad in corrugated asbestos sheets. There are raised skylight structures along the ridges with external iron walkways accessed by ladders at the north-west end. There is also a 'bridge' with braced siderails linking the two axial walkways.

The walls are of brick laid in english bond; the recessed bays are divided by flat pilasters with corbelled courses at the top of the bays and at the eaves. The gable eaves have stepped corbelling like several of the other buildings of the same period. There are blocked up entrances with concrete lintels in both central bays of the south-west gables and one of the north-east gables.

Most of the bays in the side elevations and four bays of the north-east end contain large critical window frames of twenty panes with flat concrete lintels and sills, these are still open on the north-west side where they are part of the wall shared with building 17, on the south-east and north-east they are mostly covered over in blockwork.

A small portion of the interior was visible through a hole in a steel plate in the north-west wall (plate 46). Internally the building is similar to No 17 with vertical I-section girders partly embedded in the walls between bays to support the angle iron roof trusses. As this is a double gable building there is also a central row of freestanding girders supporting the inner ends of pairs of trusses. As in building 17 there are brackets on the vertical girders at window

lintel height which may have formerly carried a rail for a travelling gantry or had some other function.

The building is in a poor and dangerous condition there are large cracks running down the sides of many of the brick pilasters and an external steel brace is supporting the south-eastern corner. This may be due to corrosion or stresses caused by having steel girders within the brickwork as with some of the other large buildings.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map

*Significance:* A large industrial building of the same design as, and contemporary to several others at Snowdown. An impressive building which may contain features relating to its former function. The building is however in a seriously deteriorated and dangerous condition.

### 3.2.20 **Building 20: Carpenter's Workshop**

*Dimensions:* 14.5m x 22

*Description:* A rectangular brick building seven bays long by three bays wide with gabled roof (plate 47). The building is of similar design but on a smaller scale to buildings 18 and 19 to which it is adjacent. The brick is laid in english bond and the bays divided by shallow pilasters, there is stepped corbelling below the eaves on the gables. The roof has plain gables and is clad in corrugated asbestos sheets and has a raised skylight structure along the ridge with external steel walkway and safety rail.

The seven south-eastern bays each has a large window with concrete lintel blocked with concrete blocks, critical window frames are still in place behind the blocking. There are blocked entrances in both gable ends.

The interior, which was seen through a hole in the north-eastern blocking, is overgrown with vegetation (plate 48). The roof trusses are made up of angle iron sections and are supported on the outer walls. There are no supporting girders built into the walls as in some of the larger buildings.

*Map evidence:* Shown on the 1937 OS map with an extension at the south-east end that is no longer in existence. In 1956 there was further small extension on the south-east but this had gone by 1975.

*Significance:* An industrial building of the same design as and contemporary to several others at Snowdown but as far as could be seen with no specific features of interest relating to its former function.



## 4 CONCLUSION

### 4.1 Summary of buildings

- 4.1.1 Of the twenty identified surviving buildings at Snowdown the majority probably date from the 1920s redevelopment of the site by Pearson & Dorman Long. These probably comprise buildings Nos. 1, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 19 and 20. There are a few buildings which may be earlier survivals such as Nos. 6, and 14. The rest comprise later additions, Nos. 2, 3, 5, 8 and 15 being built between 1937 and 1956 and No. 18 after 1956.
- 4.1.2 The buildings are all constructed in brick (excepting No. 15). The 1920s buildings are laid in english bond and most of them have similar features such as flat pilasters between bays, stepped corbelling in the gables and windows with flat concrete lintels and crittal frames. However some differ in detail such as the Lamp room which has round headed door and window openings and dentilation style corbel courses in the gable eaves and tops of bays.
- 4.1.3 The possibly earlier buildings are laid in different bonds No. 6 being in Flemish bond and No. 14 in a mix of bonds. They also exhibit some other differences in design such as the rubbed and gauged brick arches of No. 14 which may relate to function and status but also suggests an earlier date than the mid to late 1920s.
- 4.1.4 The building which stands out as wholly modern and different from the rest is the Koepe Winder House which was built before 1956 and probably represents some modernisation after nationalisation in 1947. The external walls are in brick but these are not load bearing as in the other buildings and are unrelieved by pilasters or other detail apart from the openings. The building is flat roofed and supported on a reinforced concrete frame. The whole effect is imposing and brutal and this is probably the most significant building in terms of design. This building also contains an original fitting in the form of a huge gantry hoist which spans the building and ran on wheels on the upper surface of part of the concrete frame.
- 4.1.5 Most of the other buildings are neither unusual or of intrinsic importance in terms of their design or construction and some are only of interest as comprising part of the whole colliery group. Some of the larger buildings, the workshops, power house etc., are impressive in size and differ in construction from the smaller buildings in having steel girder frames incorporated into their brick walls. These are either to support the steel roof trusses or as in the case of No. 10 to support rails for a travelling gantry hoist. These larger buildings tend to have structural cracks down the brick pilasters which are the points where the girders are embedded internally. This may be because these are the load bearing points cracking under stress or due to corrosion of the steel within the brickwork.

4.1.6 The individual buildings are not of great intrinsic architectural significance or historical significance in the national context of the coal industry but they are of regional interest as the last surviving group of colliery buildings in Kent. Individual buildings of the greatest significance are those built for a specific function within the coal industry such as the two Winder houses and the Lamp room. Most of the buildings are in a poor and neglected condition and some are structurally unsound and dangerous.

## 4.2 Discussion

4.2.1 Coal mining was of immense historical importance in the industrialisation of Britain but the industry has shrunk with such rapidity in the last 10-15 years that relatively few pits survive and what does remain from former collieries is consequently of greater importance. Whereas new uses can be relatively easily found for the remains of many dying or contracting industries (e.g. converted mills, warehouses, breweries etc) the surviving structures from collieries are much less easily converted and their complete demolition is frequently inevitable.

4.2.2 Recording colliery complexes prior to demolition is clearly ideal but this has rarely been done and it has frequently been the case that all surface features from former collieries have been demolished soon after their closure and long before any new use is found for the site. At Snowdown partly due to private ownership of the land a large number of buildings have survived even though many significant structures and evidence of the working processes of the pit have been lost. The surviving buildings are now in a deteriorated condition and the interiors are currently inaccessible but the current work has generated an assessment and external photographic record of the buildings.

4.2.3 The individual buildings are not of great intrinsic architectural significance or historical significance in the national context of the coal industry but they are of regional interest as the last surviving group of colliery buildings from the Kent coalfield. Their greatest significance is in terms of the social, political and industrial history of the region and of the coal mining industry nationally.

4.2.4 Individual buildings of the greatest significance are those built for a specific function within the coal industry and have features reflecting those functions. Probably the two Winder houses and the Lamp room are the most significant of the surviving buildings, these are specific to the mining industry and their construction reflects their purpose. Most of the buildings are in a poor and neglected condition and as mentioned above some are structurally unsound and dangerous. Others with walls that appear sound have deteriorating roof structures.

4.2.5 The site is of local interest as a former industrial site which created demand for skilled labour from other areas and caused the creation of new



communities with particular cultural values which continue to exist and evolve, and of regional interest as the last site of the Kent coal industry with substantial surviving structures. However the buildings are not listed and due to their very poor condition, as well as the inherent difficulties in reusing or converting structures such as these, its significance would not warrant the entire preservation of the site. Making the site safe for public access would necessitate the demolition of the main buildings although there is potential for some interpretation of the history of the site. The proposals do include provision for marking the footprints of the buildings in silver birch planting and information and interpretation boards (pers. comm. David Smith).

- 4.2.6 If there is the possibility of a viable interpretation centre on the site, buildings 6, 9 or 14 may be most suitable in terms of accessibility, size and historical interest (being possibly earlier buildings).
- 4.2.7 Due to the issues of maintenance and staffing a visitor centre at a site where the projected visitor numbers are low it may not be practical to have such facilities on site. On site interpretation for visitors could be achieved by the use of information boards and records of the physical and cultural heritage of the site are being collected and maintained and made accessible by the CHIK project.

## 5 **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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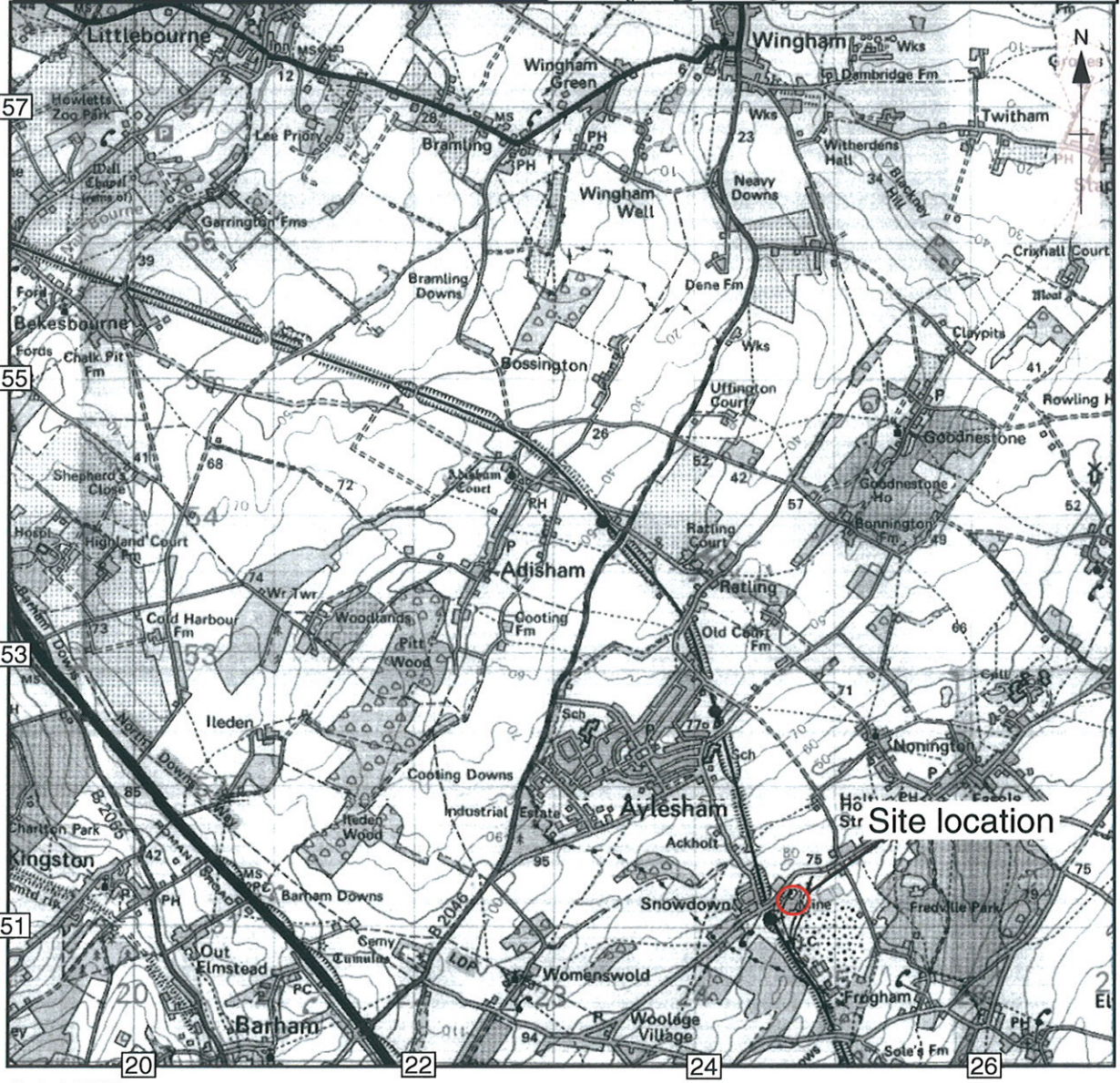
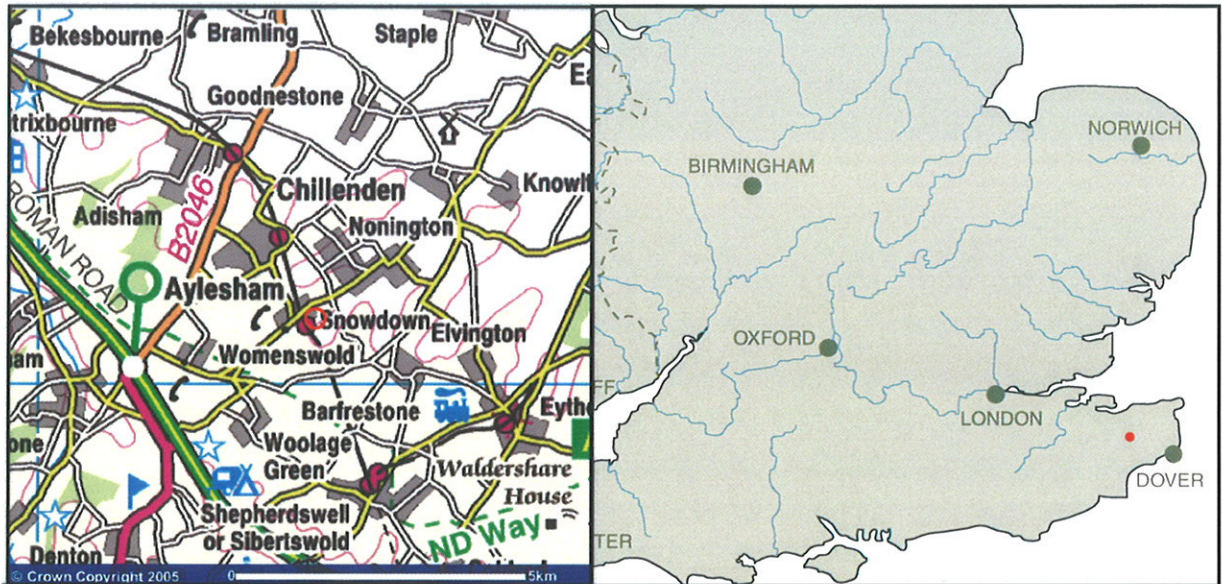
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### 5.1 **Other Sources**

[www.dover.gov.uk/kentcoal](http://www.dover.gov.uk/kentcoal)

[www.eastkent.freeuk.com/mining/snowdown\\_colliery.htm](http://www.eastkent.freeuk.com/mining/snowdown_colliery.htm)





Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location



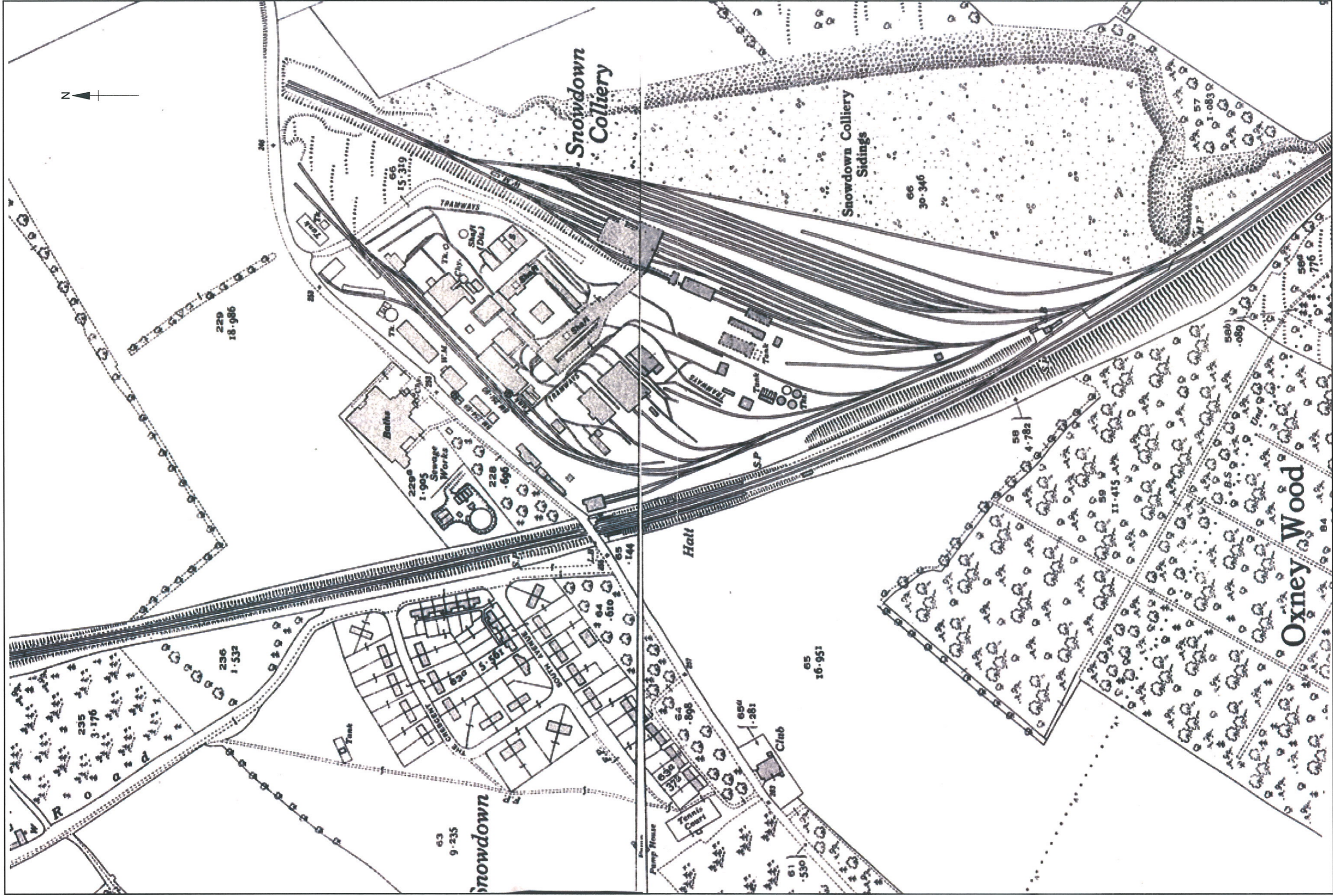


Figure 3: OS 25" Map, 1937

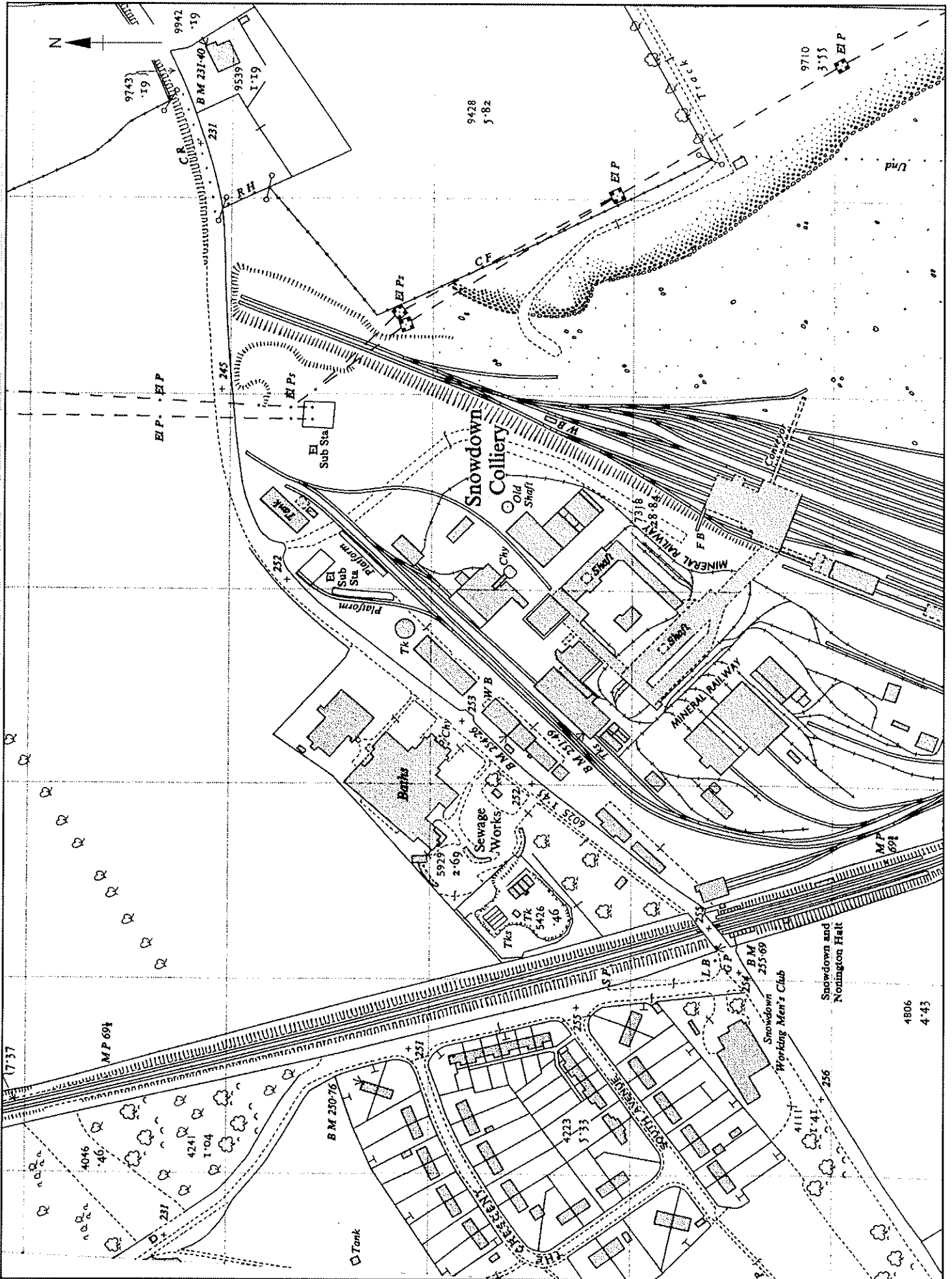


Figure 4 : Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map 1956



Plate 1 : Plaque at No. 2 shaft



Plate 2: Snowdown Memorial, Aylesham



Plate 3: Snowdown from the road



Plate 4: Offices and Power House from the road



Plate 5: General view north, offices to left, No.3 winder House to right



Plate 6: Stores and workshops block looking east

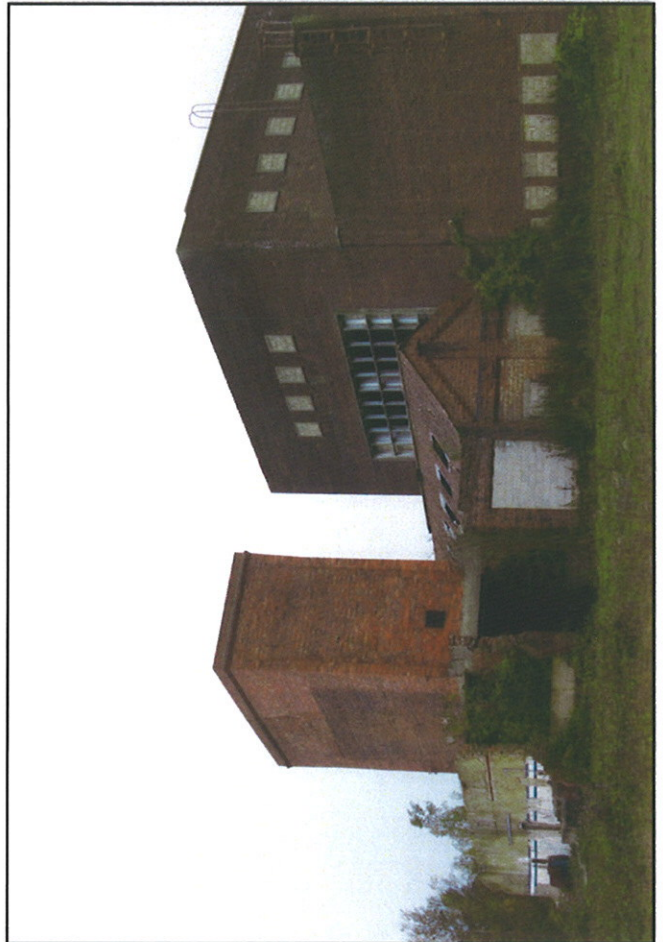


Plate 7: Fan House with No. 2 Winder House to right



Plate 8: Fan House, circular brick opening at base of tower on north-east side



Plate 9: Fan House, base of tower on south-west side



Plate 11: Fan House, concrete base in demolished section, scale of 2.0m



Plate 10: Fan House, tiled wall of demolished south-east section

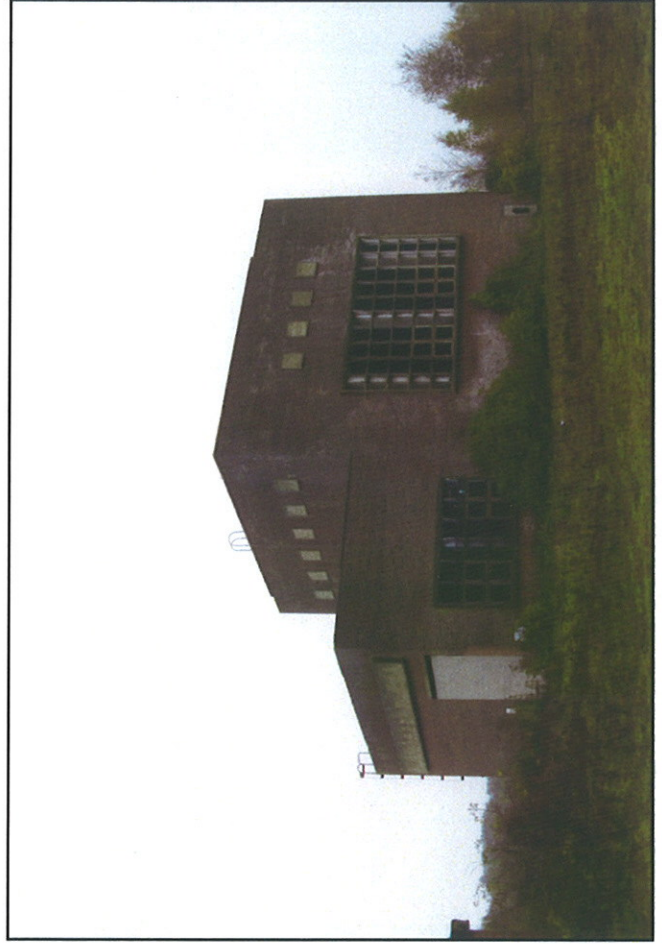


Plate 12: No. 2 (Koepe) Winder House looking south



Plate 13: No. 2 (Koepe) Winder House, interior looking east

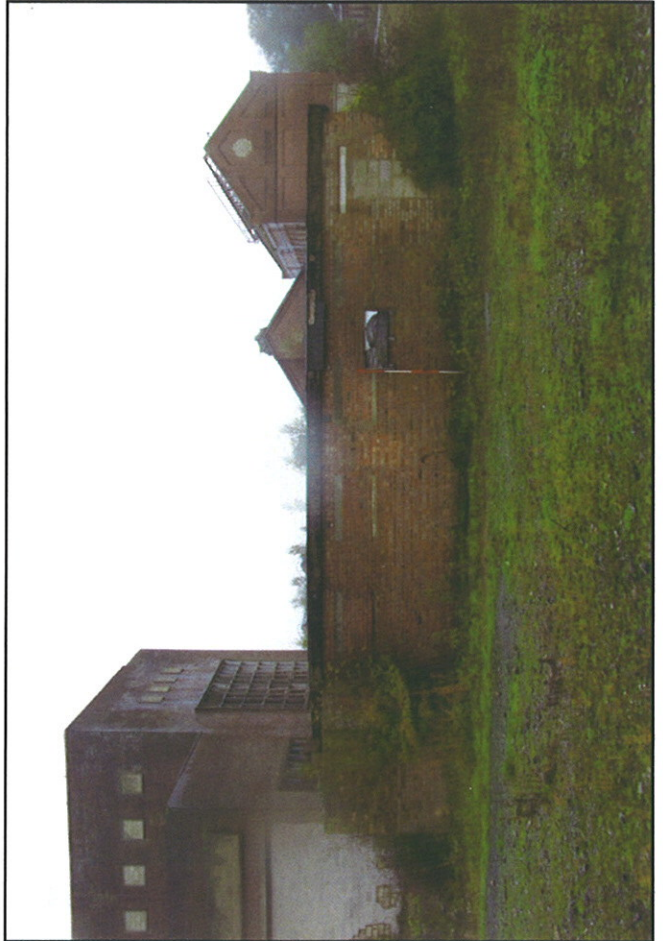


Plate 15: Explosives Store looking south-west

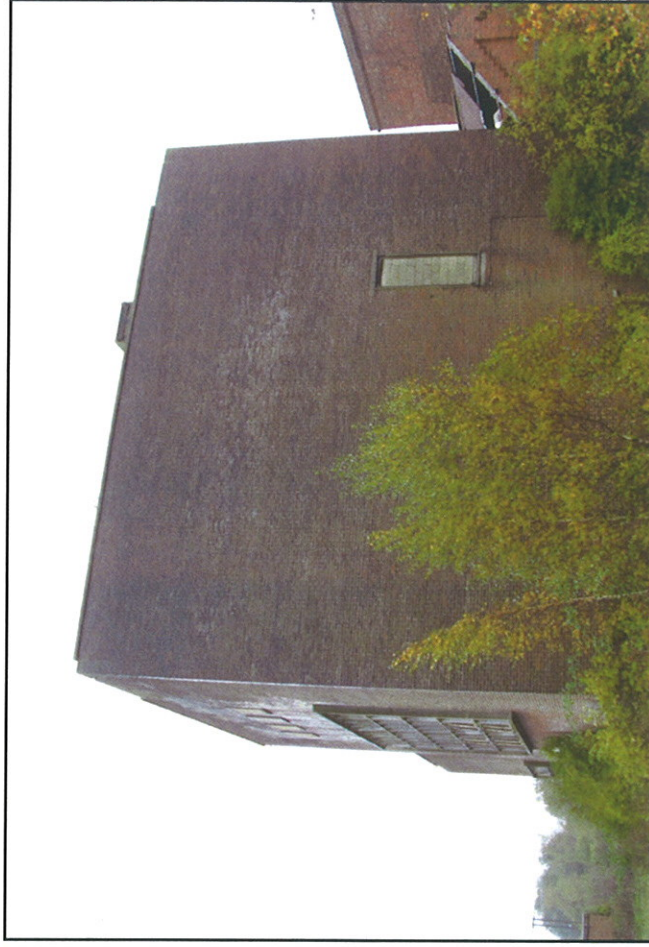


Plate 14: No. 2 (Koepe) Winder House, south-west elevation

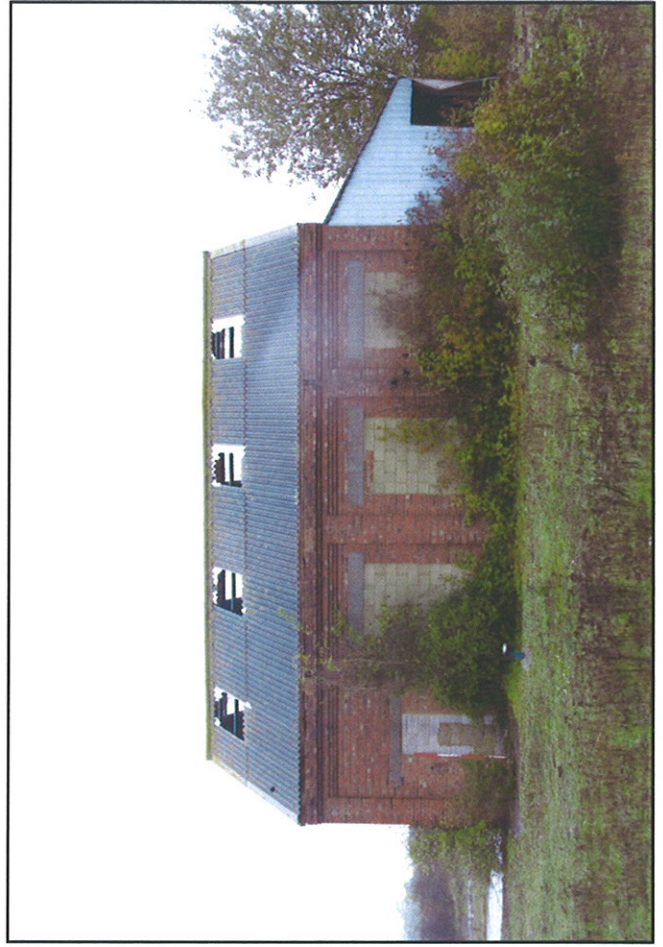


Plate 16: Building 4, south-east elevation



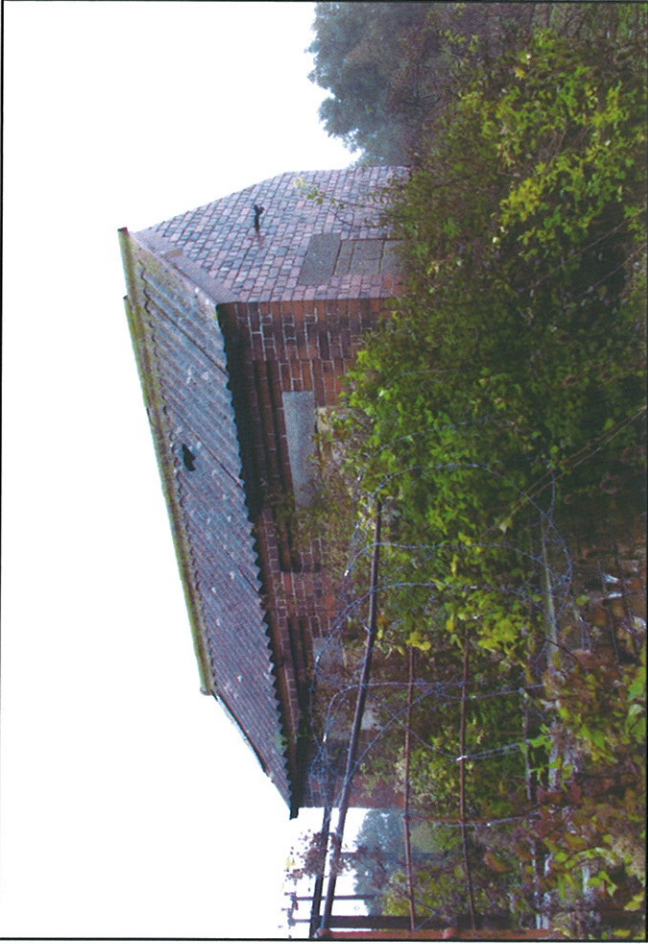


Plate 17: Building 5, looking east



Plate 18: Brick lined tank adjacent to building 5

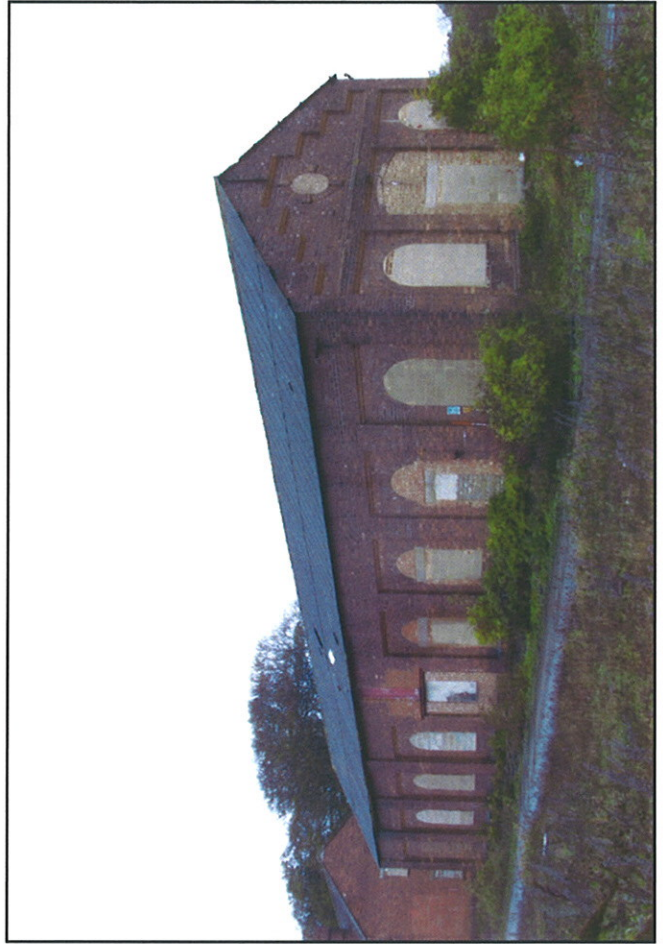


Plate 19: Building 6 looking west

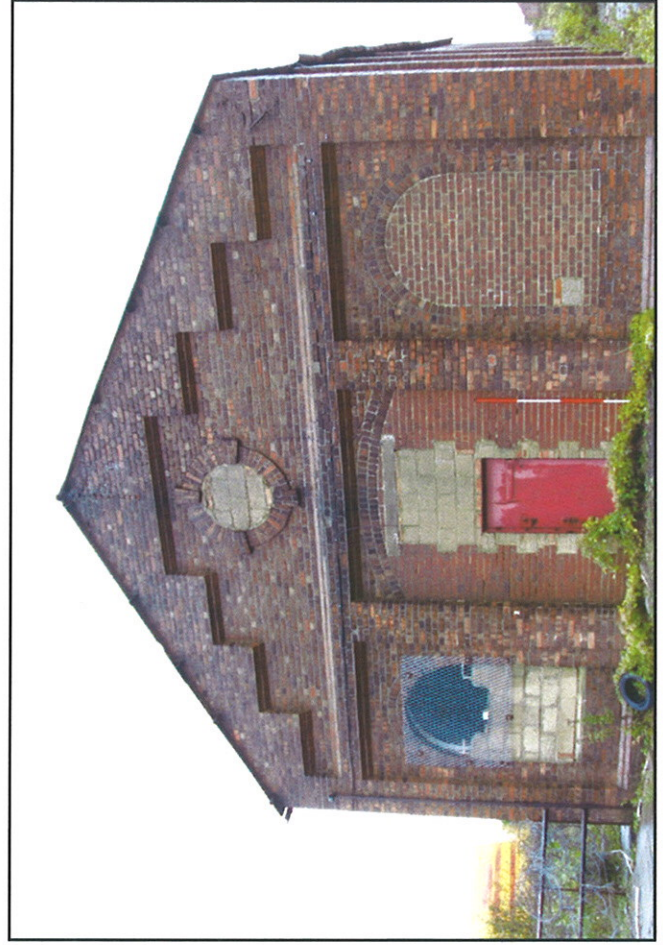


Plate 20: Building 6, south-west gable, scale of 2.0m



Plate 21: Offices looking west, scale of 2.0m

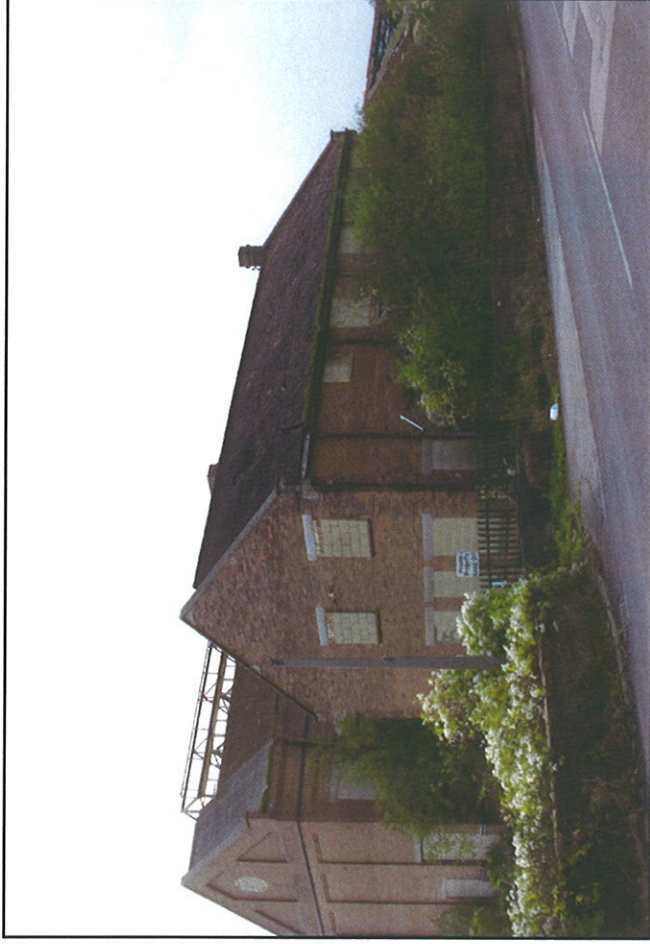


Plate 22: Offices looking south from road, power house to left

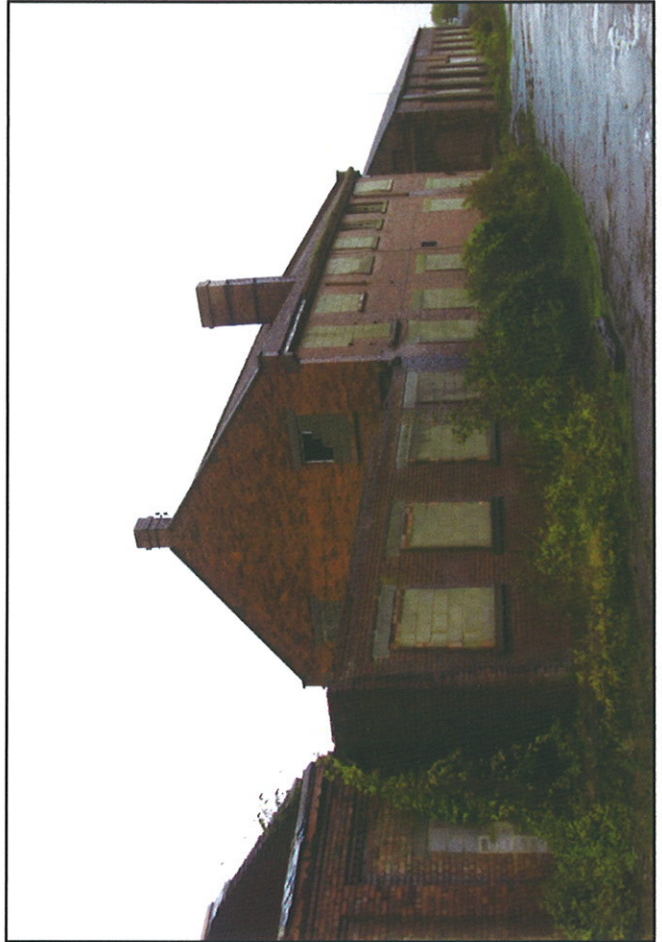


Plate 23: Offices showing extension to south-west (building 8), looking north.



Plate 24: Building 9, looking north-west, scale of 2.0m



Plate 25: Building 9, south-west gable and later extension

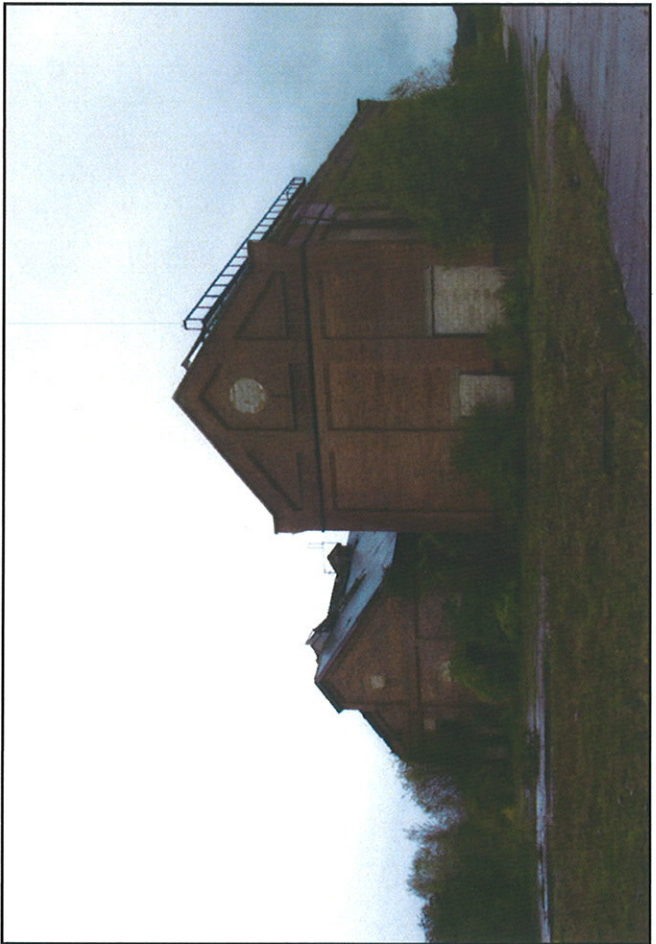


Plate 27: Building 10, north-east gable end (Power House) with lamp room to the right



Plate 26: Building 10, south-west end, the No. 3 Winder House



Plate 28: Building 10, blocked winder cable openings, view north-west, scale of 2.0m



Plate 30: Lamp room looking west



Plate 32: Infill between Power house and Lamp room

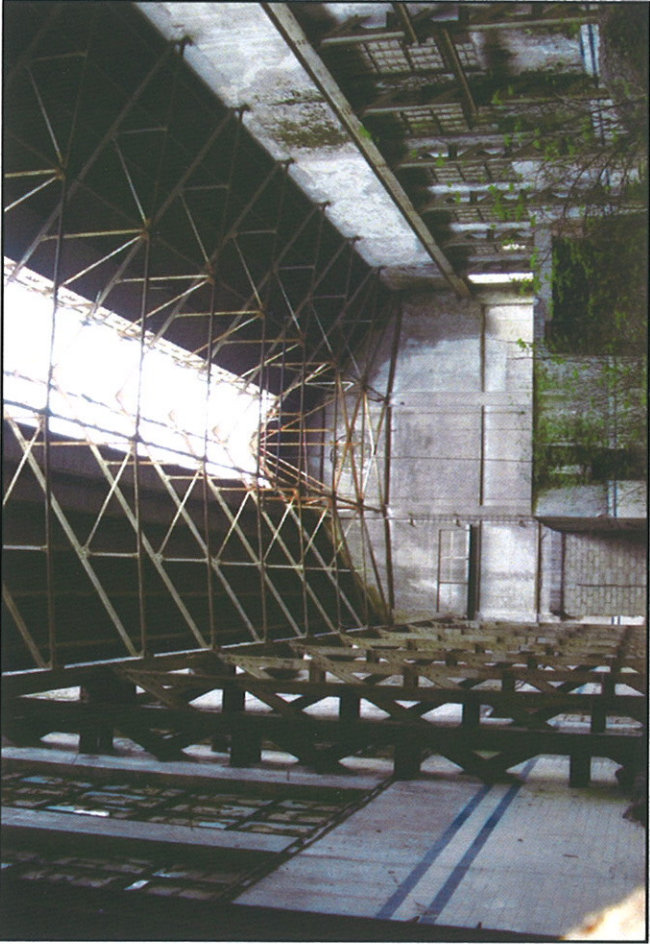


Plate 29: Building 10, interior, view north-east

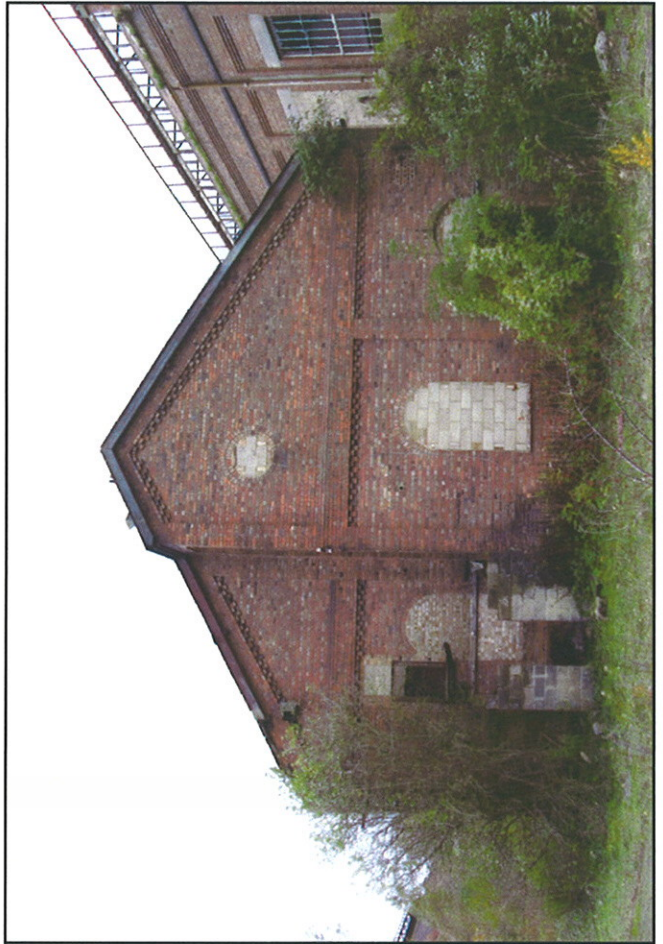


Plate 31: Lamp room, north-west gable



Plate 34: Building 12, lavatory cubicle doors



Plate 36: Building 14 looking north



Plate 33: Building 12, looking north, scale of 2.0m

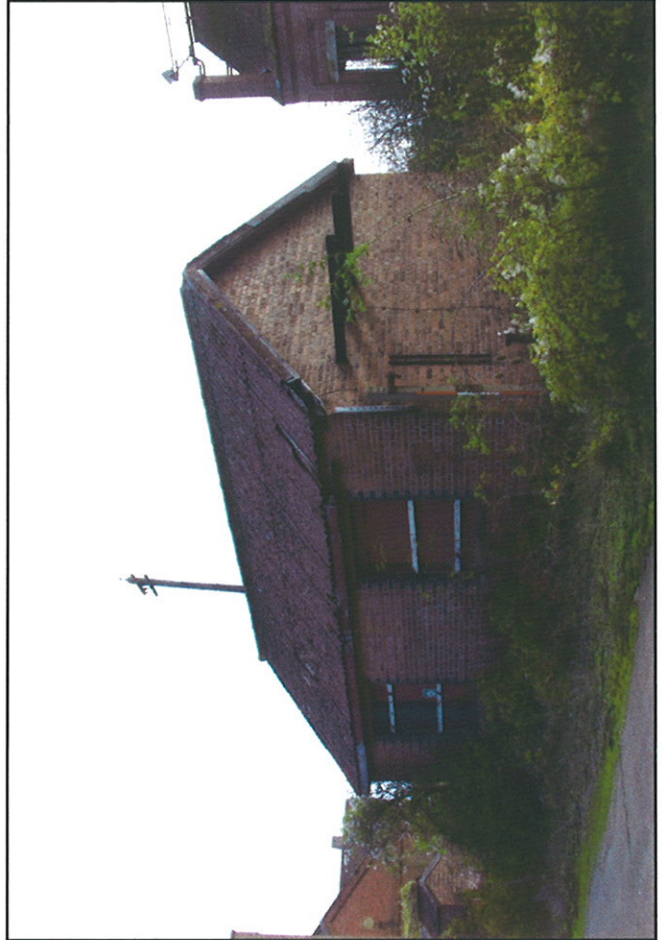


Plate 35: Building 13 looking east



Plate 37: Building 14, central bay gable and entrance arch looking north-west



Plate 39: Locomotive shed, looking west, scale of 2.0m



Plate 38: Building 15, looking north

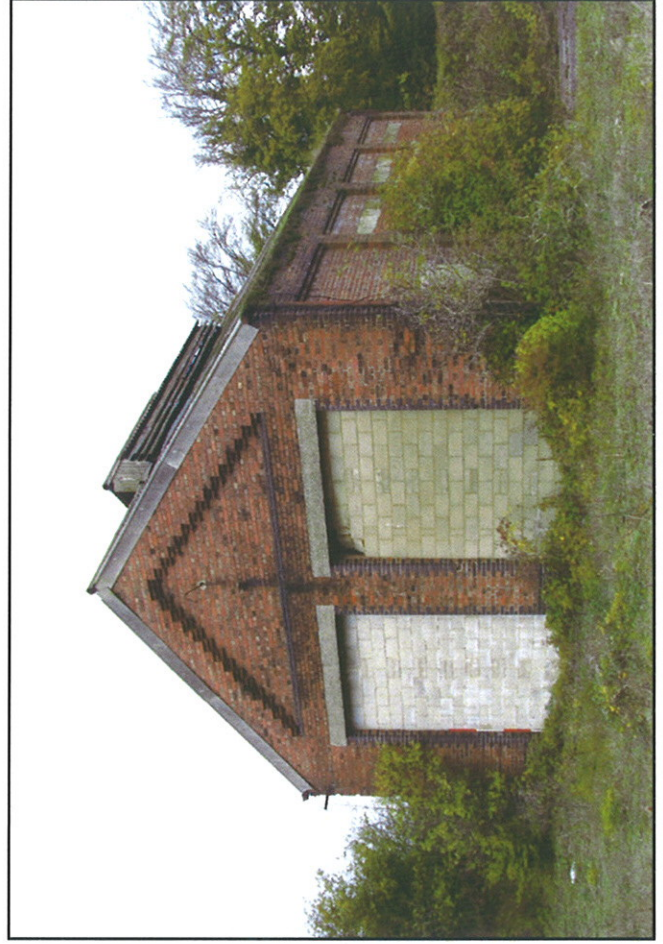


Plate 40: Locomotive shed, looking north-west



Plate 41: Building 17 looking south



Plate 42: Building 17, South-west gable with building 18 on right



Plate 43: Building 17, interior looking north-west



Plate 44: Building 18, interior looking north-west



Plate 45: Building 19, looking north, scale of 2.0m

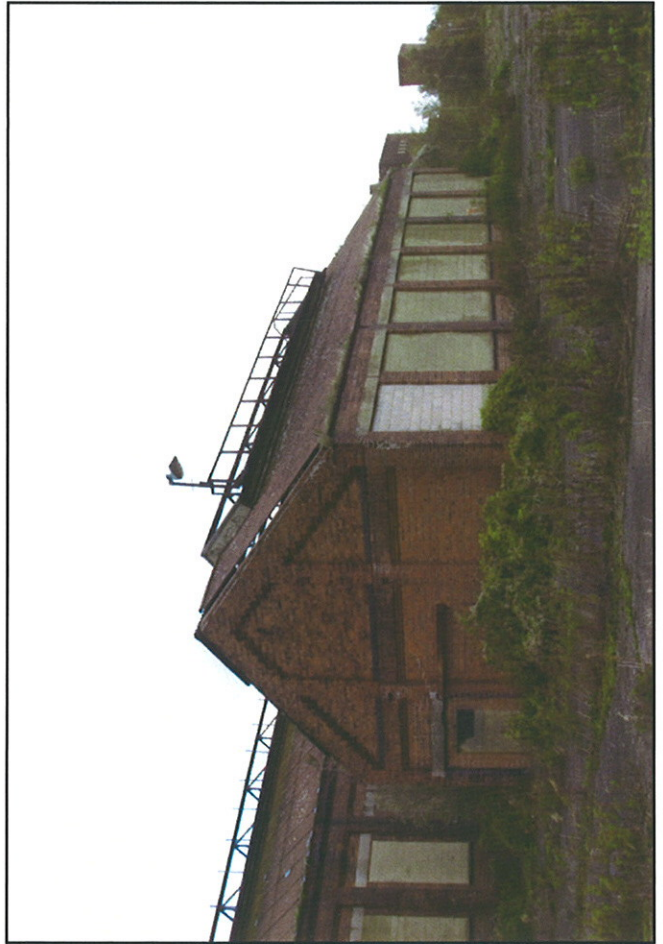


Plate 47: Building 20, looking north



Plate 46: Building 19, interior looking south-east



Plate 48: Building 20, interior looking south-west





### **Oxford Archaeology**

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