

River Chelt Flood Alleviation Scheme Cheltenham: St George's Place

Building Investigation and Recording



December 2005

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Building Location

St George's Place, Cheltenham

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RIVER CHELT FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

CHELTENHAM: ST. GEORGE'S PLACE

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RIVER CHELT FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

CHELTENHAM: ST GEORGE'S PLACE

HISTORIC BUILDING INVESTIGATION AND RECORDING

SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) have been commissioned by Jackson Civil Engineering Ltd. on behalf of the Environment Agency to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the construction of the Cheltenham Flood Alleviation Scheme. As part of this scheme two structures at St. George's Place: OAU 10 and OAU 17, will be demolished and therefore require recording in accordance with PPG15. OAU 10 constitutes red brick structures used for small scale industry, dating from the 19th century which have been subject to repair and alteration in the 20th century. OAU 10 is now in a poor state of repair, and contains few significant fixtures and fittings. OAU 17 is a modern construction, and is significant in its attachment to OAU 20 which is a terrace of grade II listed houses. OAU 17 is now used by 'Advance Windscreens' and contains no significant historical or archaeological features.

Introduction

1

1.1 LOCATION AND SCOPE OF WORK

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology have been commissioned by Jackson Civil Engineering Ltd. on behalf of the Environment Agency, to undertake a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during the period of the construction of the River Chelt Flood Alleviation Scheme. The programme of archaeological mitigation follows a period of archaeological assessment and investigation along the proposed line in 2001. The subsequent *Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment* (2001) identified two buildings for investigation: OAU 10 and OAU 17. These structures will be demolished as part of the ongoing works, and therefore a programme of building recording was required prior to the demolition and removal of the structures.
- 1.1.2 The River Chelt Flood Alleviation Scheme comprises remediation works along a c.3km length of the present course of the River Chelt within Cheltenham (Fig.1). The works run from c.200 m west of the Royal Crescent south-east (SO 9445 2233) to the northern end of Cox's Meadow (SO 9565 2137). Many areas of the Chelt are culverted under the town and only limited sections are currently visible and accessible. OAU 10 is a plot to the north of the River Chelt, containing a group of 19th century brick buildings used for small scale industry and manufacturing. It is situated to the rear of 85 St.



George's Place. OAU 17 sits directly on the bridged culvert over the River Chelt, at 87 St. George's Place and some 100 m to the east of OAU 10. It is a modern garage which is significant in being attached to the northern end of OAU 20, which is a terrace of listed grade II 19th century houses (Fig.2).

1.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 A programme of historical and archaeological desk based research was not required as part of the programme of building recording. However research was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology as part of the Cultural Impact Assessment (2001) and it is know that the red brick buildings which constitute OAU 10, were used for small scale industry and manufacturing. This plot appears on Merrit's map of 1834 and on a later map of 1885 marked as a 'carriage works'. For a long time it was the home of Cheltenham Shop Fitters, and for the past 20 years has been shared between a stonemason in the southern buildings, and a scaffolding company who are tenants in the northern buildings on the plot (this latter structures are not part of this archaeological investigation).
- 1.2.2 OUA 17 is a modern construction, and although its origin may date from the late 19th/ early 20th century, it retains no significant historical features. It is attached to the northern end of OAU 20 which is a terrace of 19th century grade II listed houses. The building is now occupied by 'Advance Windscreens'.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1.1 The general aim of the investigation was to create for posterity a record of OAU 10 and OAU 17 prior to their demolition, concentrating on the construction, history and use of the buildings.
- 2.1.2 More specifics objectives were to:
 - Investigate structures/ elements of structure which are archaeologically of most significance.
 - To determine the phasing of the structures and to appreciate the development of the site within its historical context.
 - To gain an overall understanding of the operation of the buildings through the recording of the extant features.
 - To gain a overall understanding of the significance of the buildings within the history of the subject.
 - To create an ordered archive of the work to be housed in the public depository.

3 **METHODOLOGY**

3.1 SCOPE OF ANALYSIS

3.1.1 The building recording was undertaken at Level II as defined in the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME 1996). The



structures were recorded in their current form before the start of demolition works and this consisted of three principal methods: a drawn record, a photographic record and a written record.

3.2 FIELDWORK METHODS AND RECORDING

- 3.2.1 The Drawn Record
- An overall plan of the site was included in the OAU 'Cultural Impact Assessment' (2001) (Fig. 2) showing the relationship of the structures to the surrounding environs. No drawings were provided by the client of OAU 10 and OAU 17. A first floor plan of the OAU 10 was completed (Fig.3), using hand drawn techniques. At times this was hindered by the quantity of material which remains in the structures (see 3.3). It was not possible to complete a plan of OAU 17 at the time of the site visit, as the building was in operation as 'Advance Windscreens'. This structure is however, a wholly modern structure and no evidence was found of any possible earlier origins.
- 3.2.3 The Photographic Record
- 3.2.4 Photographs were taken using 35mm film (black and white prints, colour slides) and include general shots of structures (external and internal) and specific details. Flash lighting was used to illuminate dark interiors and a scale used where appropriate. All films included a chalk-board indicating the film number and site code. Photographic record sheets where used to indicate the location and direction of each shot and any further detail.
- 3.2.5 The Written Record
- 3.2.6 Written descriptions of the structures were made as part of the annotated drawings. Additional analytical and descriptive notes were taken as appropriate to compliment elements of the record.

3.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

3.3.1 OAU 10 contained a vast array of working material relating to the use of the building as a shopfitters and masons, including quantities of marble, iron fire places and tools. At ground floor level it was not possible to gain access to the storage and toilet area to the rear of the structure along the south elevation. OAU 17 was in operation as 'Advance Windscreens' at the time of the site visit, and therefore while a general investigation was possible, it was not possible to undertake a measured drawing and investigate areas such as the roof.

4 OAU 10: DESCRIPTION

4.1 **INTRODUCTION**

4.1.1 The structures under investigation consist of an amalgamation of buildings that have evidently been occupied by the 'Cheltenham Shopfitting Co.'. They have most recently been used by a stone masons, although much of the fixtures and fittings of the previous residents remain extant. The main building is an unusual shape that has been constructed around the River Chelt that



curves from east to west. The west elevation is tapered to accommodate the river and it expands from a very narrow east elevation widening out to the west. An additional single storey structure extends to the north and is built onto the main building, and these are constructed around a central courtyard.

4.2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION

- 4.2.1 The main building forms a roughly 'L' shape around an open and covered yard area (Plate 1). The yard has a concrete floor and a corrugated iron roof supported on wood posts. The main body of the building is a two storey, red brick structure that once housed 'Cheltenham Shopfitters Co' (F1 and F2). It has a gabled grey slate roof with one small room facing east and one larger room on each floor, divided by a staircase. It has an unusual tapered shape, and is narrower at the eastern end, expanding out to the west (Plate 2). As the River Chelt bends to the west, the south elevation mirrors its course, and thus follows a curved alignment.
- 4.2.2 There is a single storey structure extending from the north elevation of the main body of the building, and this projects to the west (Plate 3). This has been built onto the permiter wall which surrounds the western edge of the building. It contains an architect's workshop and a small storage room and toilets. A further single storey structure, the mason's workshop, projects from this extension to the north and is also built onto the permiter wall (Plate 4).
- 4.2.3 To the northwest corner of the open yard area is a large warehouse structure which has most recently been used by a scaffolding company (Plate 5). This is two storeys high, and is constructed of red brick with a grey slate roof. This building will not be demolished as part of the ongoing works and therefore will not form part of this investigation.

4.3 EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION AND PHASING

- 4.3.1 The main body of the two storey structure dates from the mid-19th century, although the second storey external brickwork and roof have been rebuilt in the mid-20th century.
- 4.3.2 **South elevation:** the line of the later brickwork is clearly visible, and extends to the line of the ground floor window lintel. The ground floor has red/ brown 19th century brickwork with some later patching. The three ground floor windows are later in date and have been replaced with crittal windows (1.53 m by 1.12 m) (Plate 6). These have six lights and concrete lintels, that have recently been infilled with breeze blocks.
- 4.3.3 Above the windows the red brick dates to the 20th century and this has been rebuilt probably at the same date as the roof (see 4.5.1). The first floor has four windows, with two smaller windows at the east and west ends. The larger central windows have two divisions of two by three lights. The east window has two by three lights and the west window is a small single light window. The windows have plain wood frames and concrete lintels (Plate 7). It appears that these windows have been reused as they are not contemporary with the surrounding brickwork. The ground floor crittal windows are later in date, and



it is possible that these stronger windows were added at street level for security protection. The roof is much later in date and the internal timbers substantiate this (see 4.5.2). At the west end of the south elevation the brickwork shows that the first floor toilet and storage area are a later extension. This has been added onto the main body of the building in the mid-20th century (Plate 8).

- 4.3.4 North elevation: the brickwork is of the same date and form as described in the south elevation (see 4.3.2). The ground floor brickwork dates from the 19th century, and a clear break with later 20th century brickwork is evident. This break is situated much higher and is three courses below the upstairs window (Plate 9). It is probable that the shopfitter's workshop (F3) to the west is contemporary with the main construction of the building as the front north cross timber ties into the brickwork of the showroom/ office area (F2).
- 4.3.5 To the east of the elevation is a wood panelled door (2.20 m by 0.84 m) which faces north and leads to the central courtyard area. This provides access to the shopfitter's reception (F1) (see 4.4.2). A further large wood panelled door is situated to the west which provides access to the showroom (F2) and a large window is situated to the west of this. This has a wood frame with five divisions housing lights of two by four, and a concrete sill and lintel. It measures 1.60 m in height, although (as with the door) it was not possible to gain full measurements due to obstructions. The window has been partially infilled with breeze blocks in the 20th century in creating the additional office (as described in 4.4.4) (Plate 9). A further wood pannelled door lies to the west and this provides access to the shopfitter's workshop.
- 4.3.6 At first floor level, at the eastern end of the main structure, is a wood framed window painted blue and white (Plate 10) which has a concrete lintel is in two divisions of four lights. This is now boarded up. Further to the west situated in the shopfitter's administration area is a crittal window (as shown in plate 9). This is similar in style to those of the mason's workshop and internally it has an ornate marble sill.
- 4.3.7 It was not possible to gain a full assessment of the west elevation, as this is covered by heavy foliage and the perimeter wall also obscured interpretation.
- 4.3.8 The east elevation has been covered in cement render and it is therefore not possible to investigate the brickwork (as shown in Plate 1). This once served as the front entrance to 'Cheltenham Shopfitters'. The trappings of the early shop remain extant and the upper glass panel of the front entrance door states 'Cheltenham Shopfitters Ltd.'. Externally, the front elevation has an unusual appearance with a high gabled roof. A concrete façade has been added at a later date and covers the 19th century brick, it was therefore not possible to determine if the elevation has been subject to later modifications. A wood sign at first floor level illustrates the more recent occupant of the building; 'Christopher R Drake/ Monuments Stone Craftsman'. A plain wood sign stating 'office' is evident above the concrete front of the shop door.



4.4 INTERNAL DESCRIPTION

4.4.1 The ground floor

- 4.4.2 The Cheltenham shopfitter's reception/ office (F1) is situated at the north of the main building following the line of the River Chelt. As detailed this room once served as the entrance to the shopfitting company and internal fixtures and fittings relating to this use remain extant. The east facing front entrance has a blue painted panelled wood door (2.2 m by 0.86 m), surrounded in a moulded wood frame (and is now boarded up). The letter writing and style of the moulding suggests that this dates to the 1950s and the upper glass panel of this door states 'Cheltenham Shopfitters Ltd.' (Plate 11). A further plain wood panelled door (2.20 m by 0.84 m) faces north and leads to the central courtyard area. There is a boarded window also facing east (1.22 m by 1.62 m) that has the same blue painted moulded frame as the door. The walls are plastered throughout and there are two moulded dado rails; one positioned halfway up the wall and the other at the top. There is a concrete floor and modern strip lighting. A staircase is located at the west of the room leading to the first floor.
- 4.4.3 The Cheltenham Shopfitter's Showroom (F2) is the largest ground floor room, lying to the west of the shopfitter's main entrance. Access to the showroom is from the central courtyard through a large wood panelled door. The room has been sub-divided in the late 20th century to house a small office, and there are no extant fixtures and fittings relating to its primary use (Plate 12). The main room has painted brick walls and the east wall is clad in painted wood and a chipboard ceiling. The floor is painted wood and there is modern strip lighting. A large window is situated on the north facing elevation, to the west of the access door. This has a wood frame with five divisions housing lights of two by four, and a concrete sill and lintel. This measures 1.60 m in height, although (as with the door) it was not possible to gain full measurements due to obstructions. There is a small cupboard situated at the room entrance to the east.
- A modern stud wall partition forms a small office area at the west of the room. This is accessed by a plain wood panelled door at the west where the main showroom is entered. The partition has glass panelling at the upper level and the ceiling is wood panelled. The large window (described in 4.3.5) extends to the office although it has been blocked with the use of breeze blocks. This means that only one small section of the window is in use. This alteration is relatively recent and presumably was done at the same time as the construction of the partition wall in creating the office area.
- 4.4.5 **The Cheltenham Shopfitter's Workshop (F3)** is a red brick single storey extension to the main two storey building to which it is thought to be roughly contemporary (Plate 13). It has a simple gabled roof with a queen post truss and the rafters have planks placed loosely on top thus providing additional storage space. There is a concrete floor with double wood panelled doors. A flue remains extant on the western elevation located just below the line of the roof. There are no windows and it is a very bare room, in poor condition and with little additional fixtures and fittings.



- 4.4.6 The Cheltenham Shopfitter's Storage Area (F4) leads from the shopfitter's workshop and has a series of toilets at the west of the room, separated by an internal wall (although it was not possible to access this area). A full assessment of this room was not possible due to lack of lighting, and a large amount of junk and internal vegetation.
- 4.4.7 External investigations of the south elevation (as detailed in 4.3.3) have shown that this room is a 20th-century extension. There are three vents in this wall permitting ventilation (Plate 14). It appears that the east wall once formed the end of the property, and a window and door have been infilled with modern breeze blocks. These would originally have provided entry into the showroom/ office area (F2). It is possible that these were infilled at the same time as the partioning of the office area and the infilling of a section of the window. The lavatory block area appears to have a sloping metal lean-to roof.
- 4.4.8 **The Stonemason's Workshop (F5)** is thought to date from the late 19th century or early 20th century, although it is uncertain if it's construction is contemporary with the main body of the property. It is probable that it was built as an extension with the shopfitter's workshop. It is rectangular in plan orientated north-south with a slate roof (Plate 15). The building is poorly constructed and as with much of the property is in poor condition. The building is a lean-to that has been built onto the shopfitter's workshop at the north elevation and the perimeter wall at the west elevation. The east elevation houses large crittal windows that span the length of the elevation. These are set onto a red brick base and a plain wood panelled door provides access to the south of the windows. Internally the floor is of concrete and wood and a single simple truss remains extant. There is much evidence of the use of the building as the mason's workshop, and the workbench (breeze block base with marble top), tools, moulds and material remain extant.

4.4.9 **First floor**

- 4.4.10 A small box room lies above the shopfitter's office/ reception to the east (F1), which has two windows facing north and east that have now been boarded up. Two doors are situated on the west wall of the room at either end of the staircase. The north door is wood panelled and the south is wood panelled with glass. There are plastered walls with a dado rail, similar in style to that of the shopfitter's office below.
- 4.4.11 The staircase provides access to the first floor, and lies between the shopfitter's reception and the showroom (F1 and F2). It twists around to the west and has vinyl covered steps (Plate 16) and a moulded blue painted hand rail. Above the stairs is a hatch which provides access to the roof and to the west is the largest of the first floor rooms, lying above the shopfitter's showroom (F2) (Plate 17). This is rectangular in plan with brick painted walls (peeling in places) and has wooden floor boards. There is a blocked window facing to the west and a further two to the south (as described in 4.3.3). To the north there are crittal windows (as described in 4.3.6) with an ornate marble sill. The ceiling is of lath and plaster and suspended from this are hanging lights and strip lighting. This area was largely empty at the time of investigation although it is likely that this was used as an administration office by the shopfitters.



4.4.12 At the west of the first floor is a modern 20th-century extension to the main building (as detailed in 4.3.3). There is a lavatory to the south and a storage cupboard to the north standing either side of small open division. Painted chipboard has been used in the divisions and the external walls are painted brick.

4.5 THE ROOF

- 4.5.1 The roof of the main building is of interest as it is an unusual form because it has been built around the course of the River Chelt. At the east the gabled roof is very tall and thin, and it widens to the west thus forming a curved alignment along the south elevation. The roof is clearly much steeper to the north and broadens as it widens out to the south. It is constructed in a fairly crude fashion and props have been added intermittently at the west (Plate 18).
- 4.5.2 The roof has two by four softwood members, with 0.10 m joists and common rafters. There is a central axial beam to which the common rafters are nailed at equal spacing. One purlin is evident that appears to have been sawn off and reused.
- 4.5.3 External brickwork suggests that the roof has been rebuilt or hightened although there is little evidence of this internally. For example, there is no wall scarring indicating the lower alignment of an earlier roof. A chimney stack is extant at the west of the main first floor room (shopfitter's administration room) and the brickwork suggests that this is contemporary with the construction of the house in the 19th century. More recent bricks are visible at the top of the stack, and it is evident that this has been rebuilt at the same time as the roof. This supports the fact that the roof was simply rebuilt rather than an additional floor added.

4.6 ADDITIONAL STRUCTURES

- 4.6.1 **The Courtyard (F6)** area is covered to the east (Plate 19). The roof is of gabled corrugated iron supported on wooden posts and ajoining the main building at the north elevation. The floor is of concrete and access to the courtyard is via a large wire gate set between wooden posts.
- 4.6.2 The large warehouse in the north-west corner is to be retained and therefore it was not included in the programme of building recording (see plate 5). General observations were however made although it was not accessible for an examination of the interior. It is two storeys high, constructed of red brick and has a grey slate roof in a poor condition with many slates missing. The eastern wall has been largely rebuilt and 20th century windows and skylights inserted. Adjoining the eastern side of this large building are two small brick extensions or outbuildings. One has a large rectangular iron framed box skylight in the centre of a flat roof, while the second, on the north east corner of the plot, has a pitched corrugated iron roof.



5 OAU 17: DESCRIPTION

- 5.1.1 OA17 sits directly on the bridged culvert over the River Chelt some 100m to the east of OA10 (Plate 20). It is attached to the northern end of OA20, which is a terrace of 19th century houses which are listed grade II. It may originate from the late 19th/ early 20th century, although it's present appearance is wholly modern and it retains no significant historical features.
- 5.1.2 The brick building is single storey with a low, hipped grey slate roof and a modern extension which contains a small office and washroom and is probably less than twenty years old. There are five large late 19th to early 20th century windows in the north wall and a further two within the modern extension (Plate 21). The front of the building has a modern glass front with a wide rolling door, it is topped with modern signs for the current tenants 'Advance Windscreens'.
- 5.1.3 The interior has a concrete floor with the north wall being painted and the south wall panelled with narrow softwood boards. No fixtures or fittings survive which might indicate it's historical function. It was not possible to investigate the roof at the time of the site visit.

6 **DISCUSSION**

- OAU 10 dates from the mid-19th century and the plot appears on Merrit's map of 1834 and a later map of 1885 marked as 'carriage works'. The building has most recently been used by a shopfitting company and a stone mason. The main structure is a two storey red brick structure with a grey slate roof, which is unusual as it curves to the west and the south elevation mirrors the course of the River Chelt.
- 6.1.2 The north and south elevation's external brickwork shows that the building has been subject to repair and rebuilt in the mid-20th century. At this time an extension was also been added at the west of the building. Extending to the north is the mason's workshop which is a crude single storey structure built onto the permimeter wall of the plot of land. The date of this structure is uncertain but it is probable that it dates from the early 20th century. The buildings contain no fixtures and fittings that relate to the primary operation of the building as a 'carriage works'. Although the building is unlisted it is of some local interest and is a reminder of the area's past light- industrial use. It also has a distinctive curved form and it must have been a minor local landmark.
- 6.1.3 OA 17 is of limited historical or archaeological interest. It is a mid 20th-century which is now occupied by 'Advance Windscreens' and contains no features of historical and archaeological interest. The building is single storey with a low hipped grey slate roof and is attached to OA20, which is a terrace of 19th century houses that are listed grade II.



7 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology Cheltenham Flood Alleviation Scheme: Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (2001) (unpublished client report)

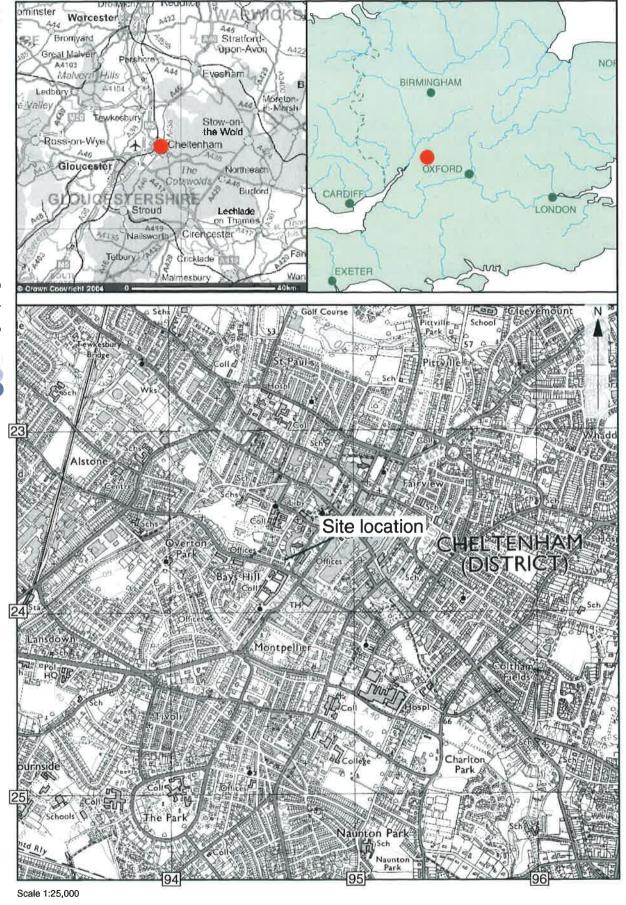
8 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: River Chelt Flood Alleviation Scheme

Site code: CHELT05

Type of evaluation: Building Investigation and Recording Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA,

Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.



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Figure 1: Site location

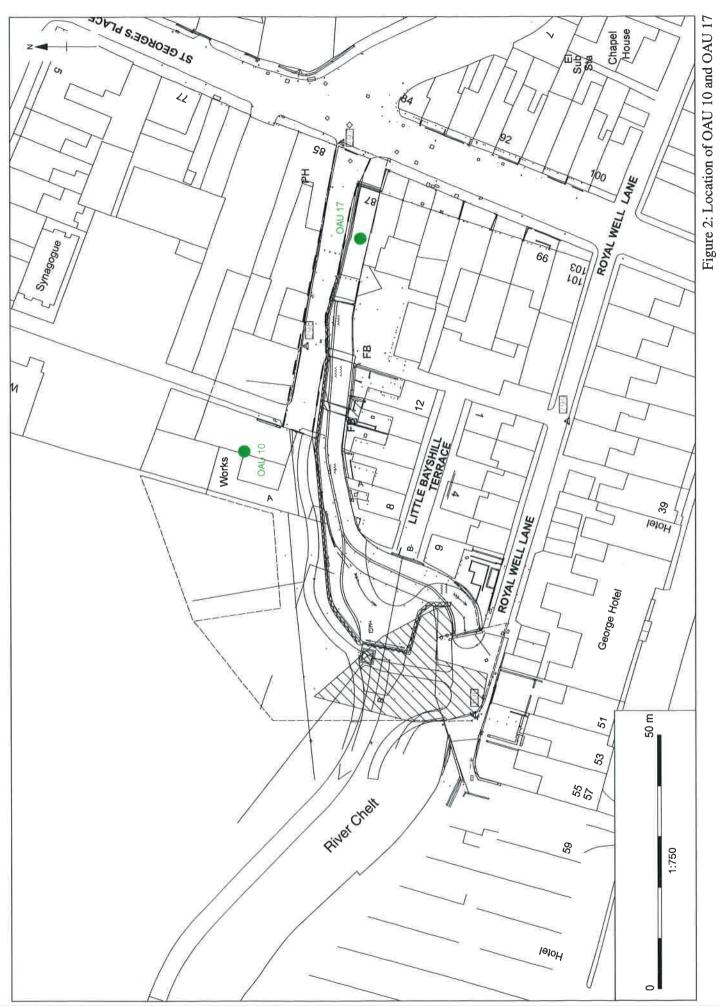








Plate 4: OAU 10 Mason's Workshop



Plate 3: OAU 10 South elevation, showing later extension





Plate 5: OAU 10 Warehouse, east elevation

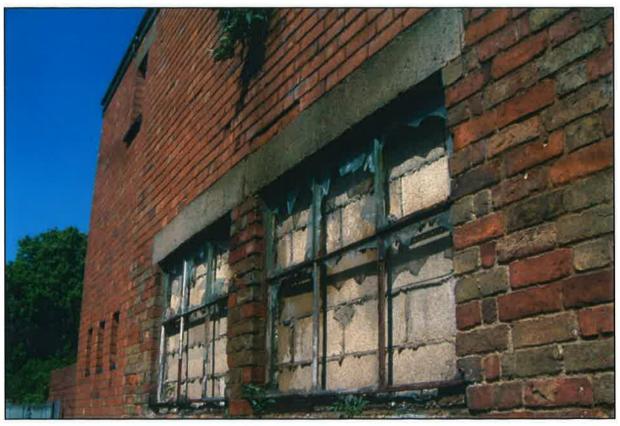


Plate 6: OAU 10 South elevation, ground floor windows

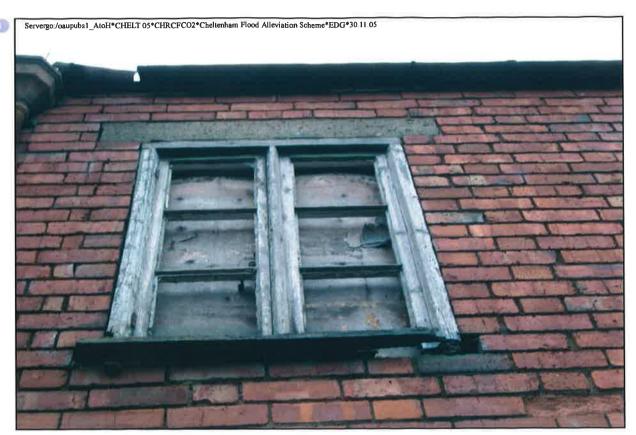


Plate 7: OAU 10 South elevation, first floor window



Plate 8: OAU 10 South elevation, showing later extension to west



Plate 9: OAU 10 North elevation, showing phasing of brickwork



Plate 10: OAU 10 North elevation, first floor window



Plate 11: OAU 10 Shopfitter's office, main entrance door



Plate 12: OAU 10 Internal view of the shopfitter's showroom showing later partition





Plate 13: OAU 10 Internal view of the shopfitter's workshop



Plate 14: OAU 10 Internal view of the shopfitter's storage area



Plate 15: OAU 10 West view of mason's workshop

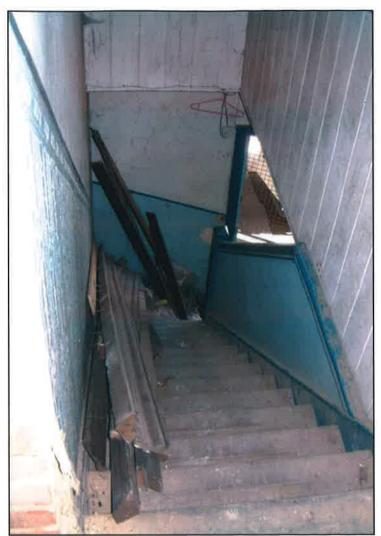


Plate 16: OAU 10 Staircase leading to the first floor and shopfitter's office



Plate 17: OAU 10 East view of shopfitter's first floor administration area

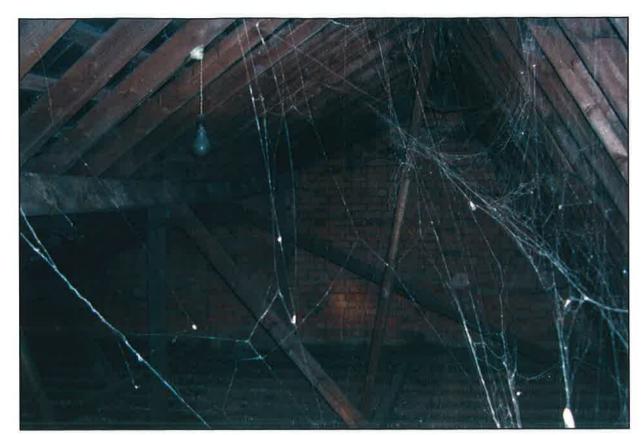


Plate 18: OAU 10 West view of roof



Plate 19: OAU 10 External covered courtyard area to the east





Plate 20: OAU 17 East elevation



Plate 21: OAU 17 North elevation



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